Petals of a Rose
A hideduo Fanzine

KIM (NONOBARKS)

AÇÚCAR (SOMEICINGSUGAR)

Under the Stars (I Talk to You)

Aynée (iridescentpull)

Pac has learned that the nights in Quesadilla Island are cold. The weather is so humid that he never would have expected such low temperatures, but every night the temperature drops and the breeze blowing from the ocean brings the cold to the city.

When he can't sleep, he likes to sit on the roofs of their shitty houses in what they dubbed as the 'Favela', built out of terracotta and oak wood. It's not even been a week, and the Favela has felt the most home in his entire life– which is really not that hard to achieve, if he's honest. He thinks it might be the people, not the place itself.

The first thing he does when he sits down is to check his communicator. The battery is running low, and Pac sees that a handful of people are awake– including Fit.

It still blows his mind that he managed to meet him. He actually got to talk to the FitMC, 2b2t veteran and historian. The guy he and his best friend have been listening to since they got out of prison almost eight years ago. It feels like a dream, to be honest– something his mind would've come up with while falling asleep at his desk, tinkering with some project while he listened to one of his transmissions.

He had messaged him, asking him why he was awake. Fit had replied something about not feeling tired enough to sleep. Pac, in a moment of impulsiveness, asked the other if he'd like to join him under the stars. And to his surprise, the older had said yes.

Now, he's sitting a few feet away from the man himself, although the tone

of their meeting has been a bit... somber.

Pac knows why.

"How is Richas?" The other's deep voice startles him, causing him to look away from the night sky.

The Brazilian bites his lip, looking away. "Sound asleep." He replies, glancing at the building where the boy was sleeping. "Mike is spending the night with him."

"Ah." Fit nods, turning his eyes back to the horizon. "Good to know."

A heavy silence fills the air between them, the waves crashing against the shores being the only noise they hear. It's not unusual to see the man so quiet and pensive, he's always the one to sit in the corner and watch the group interact. But right now, it feels as if his mind is somewhere else entirely.

Pac wants to ask what's bothering him, but he feels as if he's invading Fit's privacy. They don't really know each other– fuck, they had just met less than seventy-two hours ago! He shouldn't try to butt into his thoughts, he's not his friend, but...

"Are you okay?" The question snaps Pac out of his train of thought, his dark brown eyes darting to the older man's face. Fit is looking at him, an unreadable expression on his face.

The Brazilian licks his lips, curling and uncurling his fingers. "Yes, I am."

The answer is quick, and the other raises an eyebrow. He doesn't seem to believe it, and the Brazilian sighs.

"Okay." He starts, running a hand through his messy black hair. "Not... not really. I still can't get Richas' scared face when he respawned out of

my head."

The American hums, staring at the horizon. The moon shines bright, stars dotting the night sky. Pac is no stargazer, but he finds it quite beautiful.

"I'm sorry I couldn't reach you guys in time." Apologizes the older, an apologetic look on his face. "I tried to get there, but the moment I could see Richas and Mike on the floor, I was too late."

He feels pins and needles on his arms. "Stop." Pac says, raising his voice slightly. The other looks at him, confused. "At least you were there when it happened. I wasn't."

The American doesn't say anything, but Pac can feel his gaze on him. It makes him feel like sandpaper is rubbing his skin off. He didn't expect to get to know his idol like this– sitting on top of the zinc roof of his house, staring at the horizon while they talk about his son's first death.

He's a bit surprised when he feels a hand on his shoulder, and Pac glances to the side, only to find a sympathetic look on Fit's face.

"It wasn't your fault either, Pac." The male says, and the Brazilian scoffs. "We should've warn you that death here is easy. That we should be careful. Ramón's– my kid, you remember him? –first death was similar."

Pac turns his head, facing the ocean. The sea is calm tonight, the breeze ruffling his hair. "I didn't know Ramón was in his last life." He mutters, and the other man hums.

"Yeah, it was... surprising." Fit's voice is a bit tight, and the Brazilian knows he hit a sore spot. He doesn't want to bring back bad memories, but it's hard to forget about them. "I got too cocky and distracted while raiding an airship with Philza and Chayanne. One second I was killing some skeletons, the next I'm staring at my child's broken body, blood all over his armor."

The younger lets out a breath he didn't realize he was holding, glancing at the other. He can see how his jaw is clenched, his shoulders tense.

"And... how did you deal with it?" He asks, and the American glances at him, his green eyes unreadable. "What did you do? How did you make the guilt and grief go away?"

The older sighs, looking at the moon. His hand slides from the other's shoulder to his arm, patting it twice before he lets his arm drop.

"I didn't." He mutters. "I just learnt what I did wrong and kept moving forward. I made sure to be careful and keep an eye on him even more– and now look at us." He lets out a laugh. "Still kicking a month later. My son is getting better at combat and defending himself. I'm still trying to be the best parent I can."

"How did you keep going?" The question is quick and desperate. The Brazilian wants to know how this man, his role model, the person he looks up to, could manage to keep living and breathing after seeing his son die while Pac keeps getting haunted by the face of his own son, empty and scared. "How did you stop being haunted by his face?"

Fit glances at the moon. It's a beautiful night, the waves crashing against the shore being the only sound besides the crickets and mobs roaming around.

"Adapting and moving on." He answers, and Pac looks at him, confused. The American laughs. "I know it's vague and doesn't help you at all, but that's what happened."

And it makes sense, really. What Pac knows about 2b2t is that learning and adapting from your mistakes (if you survive) can get you a long way. It's a dog eat dog world, and if you're not quick enough to change and learn, you'll end up dead.

Although it's not the same as him in Alcatraz, the idea is quite similar. If he wanted to get out alive, he had to change and adapt. The people were different, the way they treated and talked to him was different, and the way he had to live was different. If he wanted to make it out alive, he had to be better and change.

"I think..." The Brazilian starts, his brown eyes trained on the stars. "I think I'll be alright. I'll be more careful and attentive, that's for sure." Fit smiles, looking at him. "I'm glad." He says, patting his arm. "Ramón is a fast learner, I'm sure Richas will be the same. And who knows, maybe they'll become great friends." The younger's face morphs into a small grin. "Yeah, maybe."

They fall into a comfortable silence after that, and Pac turns his eyes to the sky. The moon shines bright above them, stars decorating the dark night. He's always found it beautiful, even before he got to the island, but there's something about this sky that seems more... comfortable.

"Fit." The younger calls, and the other hums. "Thank you."He says, ant the American tilts his head, raising an eyebrow. "For what?"

"For listening to me." Pac answers, his eyes on the horizon. "And for trying to help me." Fit laughs, head thrown back and loud. It makes Pac crack a smile back, giddy he's actually talking to the guy and making him laugh.

"Oh, dude, you're welcome." He says, shaking his head. "Trust me, it's a nice change of pace. Plus, it's only been less than three days, but you and your friend have peaked my interest. You're definitely a weird one."

The Brazilian grins, turning his body to face the older. "Is that a compliment or an insult?"

"A compliment, definitely." The American replies, and Pac thinks he found something worthwhile. Maybe Quesadilla Island won't be that bad.

How is Richas`?
Sound asleep
Mike is spending the night with him...
Ah. Good to know.

TOTOTHEPOYO (TOTOTHEPOYOART)

Bouquets, dancing and hearts under moonlight

Artfulstar

Fit knew he shouldn't have stayed up so late last night. From the beginning, it was clear he would be late, but he hoped for a fashionable late entrance, not several hours late.

Struggling to put on his brown suit, he ignored the wrinkles despite having spent hours ironing it the day before. A glance at his communicator showed it was well past 8 PM. If he was lucky, the celebration would still be in full swing, and he wouldn't feel like such an asshole.

The trip to spawn was quick thanks to his waystone, but he still needed to reach the gazebo.

Still in a daze and blinded by the particles of teleport, he crashed into someone who was around the waystone of spawn as he tried to walk away from it.

The surprised yelp was from a very recognizable person, as Fit finally turned to face him.

Pac was wearing a classic black suit with a dark red tie. His black hair was tied in a ponytail, wild strands framing his face.

“Oh, Fit!”

“Sorry, sorry, Pac- I’m late for the-”

“Oh, the wedding?”

“Yeah, yeah- I’m *very* late, aren’t I?”

Pac giggled, eyes crinkling at the corners, “Kinda... The party is mostly over. I was about to go back since I just finished tucking Richarlyson into bed.”

“Fuck. I feel like such an asshole.” Fit sighed, leaning against one of the walls on spawn, running a hand against his face.

“Hey, hey!” Pac put his hand on Fit’s shoulder and squeezed lightly, “Don’t worry! There are still some people, Roier and Cellbit are also still there. Don’t worry, don’t worry! Plus, since you’re finally here, I can tell you all the fofoca that happened!”

That caught Fit’s attention.

“Fofoca?” Pac hummed in agreement, a sly smirk appearing on his face, “What kind of fofoca?”

“Let’s go to the venue, I think you’ll understand it once you see it.”

They walked together the short distance between spawn to the gazebo, stopping in his tracks as he noticed the crater where the aisle and benches once stood.

“What the fuck?!”

Pac laughed, “Yeah, I told you I had some good stuff to share.”

“Did- Did anyone get hurt? Are the eggs okay?”

“Oh, yeah. Don’t worry. It went off once everyone had left. Well, almost everyone. Slime got caught in the blast.” At Fit’s still shocked expression, he continued, “But he’s fine! Don’t worry.”

The Brazilian walked a few steps ahead, urging Fit to follow him to the short distance to the reception area.

True to Pac's words, the place was mostly empty. No children were around, all the tables were mostly empty except for two, one where Foolish and Bad were fervently discussing something and one where Phil was sitting all alone, with a glass of wine in his hand.

The dance floor was almost empty except for Cellbit and Roier, who were dancing to the lively music playing.

Deciding not to interfere with Bad and Foolish's discussion, Fit walked towards Philza's table, pulling a chair for him, Pac following behind.

"Fit! Dude! Where have you been, mate?" The blond veteran's speech was slightly slurred, a clear indicator Phil was not on his first glass or bottle.

"Hey, Phil. Sorry, I think I missed my alarm."

"Awn, that's too bad, man. The party was awesome." He took a sip of his wine glass before continuing, "The drama is going to fill the fo... hey Pac! How do you say gossip in Portuguese again?"

"Oh, fofoca, fofoca!"

"Yes, that! Thank you, mate. Shit was crazy, yeah. And now Foolish and Bad are arguing about some dumb shit."

"What?" Pac asked, head turning to face the pair who were clearly having a big argument.

"I think Foolish accused Bad of getting rid of the second bouquet, the one Cellbit threw. Apparently, he wanted it so he could get luck on his relationship with Vegetta but no one found it."

"Oh," Pac whispered and Fit could swear he heard his voice tremble a bit.

"Why does he think Bad did it?"

“I have no idea, man. I think because Bad was the person to get the one that didn’t go missing, so Foolish assumed he hid the other one. I wasn’t close to the area when they were throwing the bouquets so I have no idea how it started. I just know I’ve been sitting here for over an hour and they haven’t stopped arguing.”

Fit looked at the two immortal men sitting away from them and yeah. It made sense they would fight for something like that.

“Uhm, excuse me I- I think I forgot something back in Richinhas’ room,” Pac muttered, quickly getting up and walking away before Fit could say anything.

“What’s up with him?” Phil asked, raising an eyebrow at Fit who only shrugged as he watched the Brazilian walk away, not taking his eyes away until he disappeared in the distance.

“Hey, hey, let’s make a toast,” Philza said, already offering an empty glass to Fit.

“To what?”

“I don’t know mate, for you waking up in time instead of missing the party in its entirety? I just want an excuse for you to start drinking.”

Fit let out a quick laugh, accepting the glass while reaching for the half-empty bottle of wine and pouring a bit for himself. The old friends clinked their glasses and got to drinking.

The wine was a bit sour but sweet all the same. Fit wasn’t used to the taste, they didn’t have the luxury of things like these in the wasteland. Plain alcohol and beer were the most you could get, so the fanciness of aged wine was something he was still getting accustomed to.

His eyes once again met the direction of where Pac had walked away. Fit

started to wonder why he hadn't used his warpstone to go directly back to Richarlyson's room.

A hand clasping on his shoulder drags Fit's eyes away from the path, turning to look at Phil, the old crow is smirking, already sipping another filled glass of wine.

"Hey, mate. Wanna indulge this old friend of yours?" Fit only raised an eyebrow at his words, but didn't stop him, "Why don't you ask Pac for a dance?"

Hazel eyes widened at the words and if Fit had been drinking his wine like earlier, he would've spit it all over the white tablecloth, "What? No. Why? What?"

"Why not?"

"Because I- It's gonna be weird, right? We- It's playing a slow dance and Cellbit and Roier are *right there.* It's gonna sound-"

"Gay?"

Fit stared at his friend, hands fidgeting on his lap, "I- Yeah."

Phil laughed and shook his shoulder lightly, "Mate..."

"What?"

"I see the way you look at him, dude. You're not fooling anyone." He took another sip, "Well, maybe yourself. Just- I know the place you were in wasn't the best but we're literally in a *gay wedding.* Hell, I'm platonically married to a man. No one is gonna judge you for it."

Fit stayed in silence, eyes downcast as he refused to meet Phil's blue ones. The crow could practically read what was going on in Fit's mind, so he

decided to ease those thoughts.

“I think you’re thinking too hard. It’s just a dance. It doesn’t have to mean anything. You don’t need to confess your crush to him.”

“I don’t-”

“Sure. Again, I think you’re only fooling yourself.”

Fit let out a deep sigh, red in the face, “I’m not going to do it, Philza. Don’t push it.” He crossed his arms against his chest.

“Why? Are you a chicken or something?”

That caught Fit’s attention. He turned to his friend, seeing him take another sip of his wine while maintaining eye contact with Fit. He could see the bastard smirking, knowing he had caught Fit.

With only redness in his face and a reputation to maintain in front of his friend, Fit grabbed the wine bottle and poured himself a full glass before drinking it all in one go, hoping the alcohol would give him courage. He heard his friend laugh but the blood rushing in his ears was louder than the old crow could ever be.

From the corner of his eye, he saw Pac arriving at the entrance of the gazebo and before he could say anything, his feet were walking on their own in the Brazilian’s direction.

When the younger male was close, he finally seemed to snap out of his thoughts and opened his mouth to say something, but Fit was faster.

“Pac, do you wanna dance? With me?” He mentally slapped himself in the face, hoping he didn’t sound as pathetic as he did. Pac’s mouth snapped and Fit swore he could see the younger's cheeks become red, but of course, Fit’s brain could be imagining things.

The Brazilian seemed to struggle with words for a while, eyes wide as he scanned Fit's face. What Fit wouldn't give to know what was going on inside his head at that moment was something his brain couldn't name.

"I- Why-"

"Philza. He's more drunk than I've ever seen and he dared me to."

Pac was silent once again and Fit could swear he saw something akin to disappointment flash in the black irises.

"Oh. Well. Uh-" He struggled with the words again, hands fidgeting at the sleeves of his suit, the little golden Pac-Man cufflinks being twisted in his fingers.

Fit felt his heart start to race, anxiety creeping up as he started to wonder how he could take it back and not fuck up their friendship, but then Pac shook his head and his hand came to hold Fit by his wrist, making his heart skip several beats at the sudden touch.

"Yeah. Okay. Let's- Let's dance." He smiled up at Fit and the American felt his heart being pierced by how it hurt, but in the best way, if that even made sense.

Pac tugged his hand towards the dance floor, passing quickly by the table where Philza sat and Fit saw his old friend throw him a thumbs up and mouthed a *"go get him"* that made Fit want to smash that wine bottle on his head. He just settled for rolling his eyes and mouthing a *"fuck you"*, while Pac was ever oblivious.

When they got to the dance floor, Pac let go of his wrist and stood in front of Fit, expectantly. It took a few moments for Fit to realize Pac was waiting for him to initiate, probably since he was the one who asked him in the first place.

“I-I don’t... I don’t know how to dance.” He admitted, not daring to meet Pac’s eyes until he felt a hand on his back.

“I don't know much either. Don't worry, I'm not going to judge.” Pac guided Fit's hand to his shoulder and then interlocked their free hands together, “We're alone. No need to be perfect. Just, I don't know, sway to the rhythm of the dance. Pretty sure that's what Cellbit and Roier are doing.”

Fit's eyes zeroed on the distant figures of Roier and Cellbit slowly dancing away from everyone else. They were closer than he had ever seen either of them, Roier's head under Cellbit's chin as they hugged and danced at the same time, probably not caring if it made sense. It was their wedding. No one was allowed to judge.

Fit swallowed dry and his eyes snapped back at Pac, who was smiling at him. It would usually help reassure his nerves but now it just made him more anxious.

Noticing Fit was stuck, Pac drew them a little bit closer, now with barely 2 inches between their bodies.

It was easier said than done but once they got the hang of it, Fit felt like he could do it as he swayed with Pac from side to side, a slow song playing as they tried to match the rhythm of it.

Fit didn't dare to look into Pac’s eyes, too busy looking at their feet, scared he would accidentally step on Pac’s fancy dress shoes.

“Hey.” Pac’s voice dragged Fit out of his worries, just like usual, “Don't worry like that. You're doing fine. It's just us.”

“Philza is still here. So is Bad and Foolish.” Fit argued, trying his best to not sound like a scaredy cat. Pac shook his head, squeezing Fit's hand.

“Philza is drunk, he's probably gonna forget this whole thing by tomorrow morning. Bad and Foolish are bickering as usual. Don't think about them. It's just us.”

Fit gulped. That somehow made things scarier in his head, but he would never admit it.

A sharp pain in his foot brought him out of his worries, looking down to see that Pac had stepped on his foot.

“*Merda*- I'm sorry- I told you, I'm not good—”

Fit let out a low laugh before quickly apologizing, “Sorry, sorry, I'm not- I'm not laughing at you.”

“It looks like you are.” Pac chastised but there was no edge in his voice.

“Sorry- I just- I was worried I was the one who was going to step on your foot and then you go and prove me wrong in the best way, just as usual.”

“As usual?”

They were practically whispering to each other by now, although Fit wasn’t sure why. The music was slow and calm, but it was still loud enough so no one could hear them talking at their normal volume.

“Yeah, you and Mike always impress me with the amazing stuff you two build, like- like this place is amazing, like wow! I never could do something like this. From where I came from, there’s no space for pretty builds, no one puts in the effort. It will probably get destroyed sooner or later, you know? So I’ve always been doubtful that places like the ones you build here can exist and thrive. So yeah, you always manage to prove me wrong, in the best way. That’s- that’s what I mean.”

Pac was silent and for a moment Fit wondered if he had said something

wrong or accidentally offended the man, but when strong arms wrapped around his torso and a head laid on his shoulder, he stiffened, body going rigid at the sudden flood of touch.

"*Obrigado.* Thank you. It means a lot. I-I'm gonna keep building places like these if it makes you happy."

Fit's mouth wasn't working, so he just nodded, his body still immovable like a mountain. Pac seemed to notice his actions finally, and drew away, hands crossing across his chest, cheeks red as he avoided fit's hazel gaze.

"Sorry, I know you're- I should've asked." His voice was small, he seemed he had been afraid of fucking up things. So Fit cleared his throat and put a hand on Pac's shoulder, body still tingling from the previous contact.

"Hey. It's fine. Don't worry, man."

Pac looked up at him, eyes still holding a bit of shame but he didn't fight Fit's words.

Fit's ears caught on the closing notes of the song they had been swaying to and the American caught blue eyes watching him from a table, another filled glass of wine in hand and a mischievous smile. That meant no good in Fit's book. He needed to get out of there before he embarrassed himself further in front of everyone, especially Pac.

He broke the stare down with his old friend before squeezing Pac's shoulder to get the younger's attention, "Hey, how about we ditch this? I don't want Philza doing more drunk dares."

"Oh." Pac met his gaze, deep in thought for a second before nodding, "Yeah. Okay. Sounds good. Where to?"

Fit stopped to reconsider his options before an idea appeared on his mind.

“Do you have the warp to Ramón’s home?” Pac nodded, “Let’s go there, I want to show you somewhere cool near there.”

Without further ado, Fit pulled out his warpstone from his pocket and warped away, leaving behind purple particles. It didn’t take much longer for Pac to appear in a flurry of purple specks beside the waystone in front of Ramón’s house.

“Uh, I’m just going to check if Ramón is okay, is that fine?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah! Go ahead.”

With a small smile, Fit headed inside Ramón’s protected home, seeing his son fast asleep, clutching Meathead close to his chest. Fit crouched beside the bed, fingers running through brown locks as he watched his son breathe in and out for several moments. He smiled and kissed him on the head as lightly as possible to not disturb his sleep before getting back up and turning back to exit but his eyes caught Pac staring at him through the window.

As soon as their gazes met, Pac averted his eyes, turning away and Fit raised an eyebrow at it, but didn’t question it further.

Once Fit was outside, Pac walked over to him, a question already on his lips, “Is he okay?”

Fit smiled, hands going to the pockets of his suit jacket, “Yeah, yeah. He’s fine. Just- I just wanted to check. I woke up in a hurry because I was late for the event. I didn't even have time to pass by here to check on him as usual.”

“I see, I see.”

They were quiet for moments before Fit remembered why he had even brought Pac here.

“Well, uh, follow me. Let me show you what I was talking to you about.”

They walked the short distance over to Fit’s lavacast base, the moon high up in the sky behind it. Fit pulled out his Grappling Squok and gestured for Pac to do the same as they rode their way up to the top of the rooms. Once they reached the highest rooftop, Fit climbed his way up the stairs to the highest garden point, sitting on the edge and gesturing for Pac to do the same.

“Wow, this place is amazing, Fit! I had no idea you had a garden up here.”

“Ramón did it for me, so I could plant the flowers Tallulah gifts me instead of just putting them in a chest. I think it’s a pretty nice place. It gives me a view of the whole island, you know?”

“Yeah! I should build something like this on Chume Labs, just a place where I can go and be alone if needed.”

Fit hummed in agreement, pulling out his communicator as he heard it ping and saw Philza had whispered something to him.

Ph1lza whispered to you: lmaooo u took him to your house
Ph1lza whispered to you: good job mate get that man
Ph1lza whispered to you: dont forget to thank me when you kiss him

Fit felt his face burn as he just typed a quick *‘Fuck you’* to the older man and pocketed his comm and leaned back before laying the grass and staring up at the sky. He closed his eyes, hearing the distant sound of the waves crashing against the shore of his home and the wind hustling around him. He heard Pac shuffle around a bit but didn’t open his eyes.

“Hey,” Pac’s voice calling him, made him open his eyes and move his head to stare at the Brazilian, who had a bottle of wine in his hand, his backpack at his feet from where he had probably fetched it, “Do you want it?”

Fit blinked a few times before nodding, getting up from the grass, taking the bottle in his hands, and taking a swing and sip directly from the mouth of the bottle before offering it back to Pac, the alcohol burning against his throat. His body immediately ran hot, helping against the shivers of the cold wind against him.

He watched as Pac took a sip of the bottle too before putting it besides him on the grass. Fit watched as Pac took off his suit jacket, folding it and undoing his red tie along with a few top buttons of his dress shirt.

Fit's eyes fixated on the shape of Pac's now exposed collarbones, noticing how because of his usual get-up, he never got to see the Brazilian's neck. It was littered with freckles and small marks and blemishes that he could barely see with the low light, but would definitely be able to count them if they were in another place. Fit watched with trained eyes as Pac's Adam's apple moved as he sighed and—

Fit shook his head, closing his eyes tightly and trying to get the image of freckled skin and a beautiful tanned neck from his head.

"You okay?" Pac's voice snaps him from his reverie and he opens his eyes, dark eyes gazing at him. He nods, lying through his teeth, "Yeah, just- just thinking. You know?" Pac doesn't say anything, leaning back on his hands and watching the island below. "You okay?" He parrots the question and Pac lets out a small and airy laugh, hand running against his face.

"Should I be okay?" Pac mutters, his voice barely audible above the wind rustling. The two sit in silence for a moment, the air thick with unspoken fears and uncertainties, the American giving Pac a moment to decide if he would continue the thoughts or not.

"I-I just- I'm happy for Cellbit! I am, believe me. Gods, I don't think I've seen this happy ever and I've known him for years. But now... I don't know what to do. The longer we stay stuck on this island just reminds me things

are going to change." Pac started rambling but Fit just let him. This was clearly something he had been holding in for a while.

"And it kinda scares me, you know? There are good things, of course. Richarlyson, he is- I don't think I would have a reason to even wake up on the island if not for him. But isn't that sad? What am I going to do once he hatches? I have Mike and the favelas but again. They all have something for their future, except me. Cellbit has a family now, Mike is intelligent enough that once we get out of this island, I'm sure he's going to bring what he learned to the world and he'll be acclaimed. Felps is- well, Felps. He doesn't need a future, I think he's already got everything figured out."

Fit stayed in silence, fingers tracing idle patterns on the dirt as he heard Pac's worries.

"Everyone I'm close with has something for them waiting, except me and it kinda terrifies me. I try to just- keep it hidden in the back of my mind but today it just all came back because of that bo-"

His mouth snapped shut and Fit watched as he swallowed the words he was about to say, knuckles white as they gripped onto the backpack.

Fit's mind started working, connecting dots more gradually due to the alcohol affecting his brain but eventually, he reached a conclusion.

"You caught the missing bouquet, then?"

Pac didn't meet his eyes, didn't confirm nor deny in any form but the way his hands gripped the backpack tighter told a whole story.

Finally, Pac sighed and opened his backpack, revealing a bouquet of dark pink flowers he recognized from the decorations around the venue.

"You caught me." He let out a dry and short laugh, fingers playing with the petals.

“I assume that... brought unpleasant thoughts to you?”

“Yeah. I-I-I didn’t even think about it when I shoved myself in the crowd during the bouquet toss, you know? It seemed fun, it’s a tradition. But then people started teasing Bad about how he was the next one to get married on the island and I-” he let out a deep sigh, “I freaked out.”

“Can I ask why?” Fit tried to sound as non-judgemental as he could. The last thing his friend needed at the moment was more guilt in his mind.

“I-I didn’t like the thought of being the target of the jokes that I’m going to be the next one to marry on the island. I-I’m not ready for something like that. It sounds scary when I think about it and those jokes would just- make me more pressured about what I’m going to do for the future. So I hid it. I hoped people wouldn’t have noticed that one bouquet went missing, but when Philza mentioned it, I freaked out and had to take a walk to calm my nerves about it.”

Fit didn’t know what to say, so he settled for something simple.

“I’m sorry.” Pac snapped his gaze to him, eyes wide as he tilted his head.

“For what? You weren’t even there.”

“I feel sorry that you feel this way. I think I relate a lot to what you’re feeling.” Fit let out a sigh, he felt vulnerable talking about it but decided to say, fuck it, he had come this far, “Like, I try not to think much about the future too because- what’s going to happen to me once we manage to leave the island is something unknown. And it kinda freaks me out too.”

Pac kept his silence, black irises still watching Fit’s every move, making the American's stomach churn, so he kept talking, “What I mean is: if you ever think you’re alone in those thoughts, you can always count on me, okay? You don’t need to hide them. I’m your friend and I’ll gladly lend you an ear if you want to talk about it.”

When he thought the Brazilian would keep being silent, he let out a small laugh, genuine this time.

“I thought for a second you were going to say you were going to lend me an arm.”

Fit was taken off guard, not understanding the joke at first before it dawned on him and he let out a loud laughter that beckoned Pac to laugh along with him. They kept laughing until their stomachs hurt.

“God shut the fuck up.” Fit let out between laughs, lightly shoving Pac, who shoved him back.

They fell back in silence, but this time a comfortable one, the remains of the shared moment lingering between them.

“Hey, Fitch?” Pac’s speech was slightly slurred now, probably due to the alcohol and the tiredness but he didn’t mind, he found it cute if he was being honest, “Can you- can we promise to keep this talk between us? I-I don’t want the favelas finding out about it and worrying.”

Fit breathed out a sigh before smiling, taking one of the flowers of the bouquet and tucking it behind Pac’s ear, fingers lingering against his cheek for a moment before drawing it away.

“I promise you that, Pac. You can trust me.”

The Brazilian seemed surprised by the gesture but finally smiled, fingers playing with the ends of his hair.

“Obrigado, Fitch.”

“Now, you promised to tell me all the fofoca of the wedding. I’m still waiting for that!”

Pac's smile somehow got bigger, "Okay, okay! I think we can start with how slime tried to interfere with the ceremony—"

"You're shitting me!"

Pac laughed at Fit's reaction, the gossip already on his tongue, "I'm not! I think it all started when..."

In the end, they stood in the garden above the island, laughing and sharing moments, lighter than ever, with a shared understanding that they were not alone in their uncertainties.

PAM(E) (PAMELA_LNTT)

HEY!
PAC, RIGHT?
SIM! UH-I MEAN YES! THAT'S ME!
I'M-
YOU'RE FITMC! I KNOW WHO YOU ARE!
WELL,
THAT SAVES ME THE NEED TO INTRODUCE MYSELF, I GUESS.

BY THE WAY, THIS IS MY SON RAMÓN.
AH! NICE TO MEET YOU RAMÓN!
I LOVE YOUR MUSTACHE!

SO, UH, DID YOU NEED ANYTHING..?
AH! NÃO! DESCULPE!
SORRY! I HEAR MY BROTHER CALLING ME!
I GOTTA GO!
POP!

Will you share your soul with me

Cookie (cookiedpizzas)

Fits at spawn with Ramón the first time he feels it. The hairs on the back of his neck stand up He feels like he's being watched.

Fit reaches for his sword, taking the area in around him. He sees a flash of blue and green disappear behind a tree.

Oh.

It's some of the new guys, from the ship that crashed into the island a few days ago. Were they twins? Brothers? He doesn't really remember.

Doesn't explain why they're following him though.

He sees the one in blue shoved out from behind the tree and then warp particles activate as the other person abandons the blue one.

Fit racks his brain quickly for a name. He sees the decal on the hoodie and it comes racing back.

This guy is called Pac. He is remembering now.

He looks down at Ramón. Ramón shrugs back at him as the other guy is nervously wringing his hands out. Fit decides to take some pity on him.

“Hey, you're Pac right?” He calls out to the other, moving his arms away from his weapons, crossing them over his chest instead.

“Sim! Uh I mean yes yes that's me.” Pac replies with a big beam on his

face and a wave. “I'm-”

“You're Fitmc!! I know who you are!!” Pac says excitedly, flapping his hands slightly.

Fit is a bit taken aback at this. It must show on his face slightly as Pac goes red.

“Well, that saves me needing to introduce myself I guess. This is my son Ramón by the way.” Pac brightens back up at that and moves to crouch in front of Ramón.

“Nice to meet you Ramón!! I love your mustache!”

Ramón places a sign down to reply to Pac, Fit decides to look at the new person to assess what their deal is. He's coming up blank however.

“Uh did you need anything?” He awkwardly asks as Ramón breaks his sign. Pac goes red again and backs up laughing.

“Ahh não desculpe! Sorry I hear my brother calling me! I gotta go!” Pac yoinks a warpstone out of his inventory, drawing the runes to somewhere as he runs away.

Fit watches him leave in confusion. The silence was deafening. Ramón seemed deep in thought.

That was weird.

It's two days later when he feels the same feeling again. He's hunting catfish near his house when the hair stands up on his neck again.

He looks around, and sees a flash of blue mixed with warp stone particles. Was Pac watching him again?

He shakes his head. Maybe he was just nearby for another reason. Fit knows he's a paranoid person.

Honestly the moment Pac heard Fit speak he knew **EXACTLY** who he was.

He had spent hours listening to the tales from the wastelander historian while doing rehab. Rehab being; committing crimes and stealing shit with his soulmate.

He would listen to the stories of incursions and wars instead of investing in the therapy sessions that had been recommended to him.

The therapist had suggested many things he was NOT a fan of. He wasn't going to do exposure therapy, and he wasn't going to up and leave his soul brother. She claimed he was too “codependent” and it was “impacting his ability to heal” which was obviously a pile of lies. He thought he was doing quite well thank you.

To be fair, seeing Cellbit on that ship with him made him almost regret stopping therapy. Pac was always willing to give people a second chance though so he was trusting in the fact that Cellbit’s therapy had gone better than his own.

His therapist had also said he forgave too easily and he was too loyal. She didn't know anything.

When his eyes had landed on the rugged veteran, his first thought was; “I wonder if he could carry me out of here.”

As soon as he heard him speak, Pac let out a squeak. He knew that voice.

When they were introducing themselves to the crowd, Pac had to force himself not to stare. How was everyone just so casual around such a legend?

His brother was staring at him dead pan. Mike knew. Mike was judging.

Pac tore his eyes away from the buff man he had been almost infatuated with. Finally he could ask all the burning questions he had about the audio stories. He just had to build up the courage to ask about them.

And so began Pac's little too and fro. A dance almost. He tries to get close to Fit to have a casual conversation, overthinks it and then teleports away before he can be spotted.

He was just glad that Fit never saw him. He didn't want to come off as some creepy stalker fan. Even if that's kind of how he was acting, but in his defense, he gets a bit nervous when it comes to this kind of thing and usually ends up overthinking. It doesn't matter.

Anyway....

Today was the day.

Pac had decided he was going to properly approach and *hopefully* befriend his idol. He could see Fit approaching the wall. This was his chance!!!

Pac moved quickly towards Fit, trying to nonchalantly intercept.

He was mentally going over the conversation in his head when he noticed Philza.

Oh shit this wasn't part of the plan.

Pac ducked into the nearby lake, he could stay hidden here until Philza leaves. He watched Phil gesture towards where he was hiding.

Shit.

Are they coming closer?

Pac duck's his head underwater, using a lilypad as a disguise. They're both standing right next to him on land.

Pac can feel his heart beating rapidly in his chest. It's OK. They have to leave soon. Tick.

Oh shit he's drowning.

He glances up. It would be too weird to emerge now.
Pac mentally sighs and sinks to the bottom of the pond, drowning himself. At least he kept his inventory empty today.

Pactw drowned trying to escape ~~Fit.~~

Pac comes to with a gasp on his bed. He checks his communicator and receives a message from his brother which simply reads “L”.

He lays back on his bed. At least the handsome historian hadn't seen him. Another message pinged on his communicator.

Phi1za -> Pactw: any reason why you decided to drown yourself in front of us?

Ah shit.

It's been about 3 weeks since the Brazilians landed on Quesadilla Island. Fit was starting to get annoyed with Pac.

Every few days he would catch him watching. He hadn't said anything since the first time, and he always left quickly. Fit was over it. He was going to confront this guy and see what his deal was.

People watching him made him feel like he was back on 2b2t being spied on. Or back in the orphanage being watched. He needed this guy to cut it out.

Well the meetup near the wall, the one near the ship and the other 2 times near spawn had all failed, but each time was just making Pac more aware of how handsome the other was. He always had a thing for buff people but Fit was just .... Something else.

He's leaving spawn one day, mentally rehearsing a conversation he could have with his idol and also imagining what it would be like to be held by someone like him, when he runs into someone.

He feels warm muscle and a hard chest collide with his face. His hand brushes against a toned chest making him swoon slightly. It clicks in his brain and his eyes go wide and he jumps back.

It's Fit. He appears to have been looking at his communicator and didn't see Pac. Well until Pac crashed into him.

Fit looks down at him and his eyebrows crease together. He looks angry. Uh oh.

Why is he kinda?

“It’s you. Why are you following me?” He says in a semi threatening tone, pointing a finger at the Brazilian, brows pulled together in a frown.

Pac's heart gets sent going at 100 miles an hour.

“Eeeeeep!” is all he can get out before he tries to reach for his warp stone, he needs to get outta here.

“Yeah. No. We’re not doing that again.” Fit says calmly grabbing both of Pac's wrists, trapping him into a conversation.

Pac goes redder, which he didn't think was possible. He is feeling overwhelmed and it all just overflows verbally.

“Hey uh-Fitch! Question, I-I, incursion, war, explosions!” He just kind of blurts out in one heap words hurriedly clashing together.

Fit's eyes widen hearing the phrase “incursion”. He had never mentioned his past to anyone here. Well apart from Phil, and even then Phil didn't know everything.

“How….how do you know about that stuff?” He growls out suddenly on the defensive. Maybe Pac was a spy….Wouldn’t be the craziest thing about this island.

“R-radio s-station.” Pac manages to stutter out. He doesn't look very scared however, Fit notices. Pac appears to be looking at his arms instead. Face flushed a very bright red.

“Hey are you ogling my muscles right now?” Fit said in surprise, dropping Pacs wrists, pulling back suddenly.

“Nope!” Pac lied swiftly.

This guy is just… something else. He’s bold.

Fit raised an eyebrow at the other. Whatever, at least he knew this guy was just a fan, instead of one of the federation's weird stalkers. Although it didn't mean he *wasn't* a stalker, he was just not a federation one.

“If you are referring to the radio channel I used to broadcast the history of the oldest anarchy server on, then yes that was me.” He said, crossing his arms defensively. “I would also rather you don't go telling people where I came from. People are already on edge enough here anyway. I don’t need everyone knowing I'm from the wastes.”

Pac nodded. He let out a breath and started fiddling with the sleeves on his hoodie.

“I'm sorry for following you around. I-I uh honestly just wanted to talk to you about 2b2t, I always had a fascination for the place but I was to-too scared to go there myself. But every time I saw you, I overthought it in my head and then got scared. I'm sorry, I'll leave you alone now, Fit.”

Fit was taken aback. Someone who was interested in the history of where he came from? Pac had started to walk away, Fit just sighed and reached for his arm.

What am I doing? Why am I even humoring this guy?

“Pac. Wait.”

Pac stopped and turned around. He looked confused at Fit.

“Sim? I-I mean yes?”

“Look, I think we can maybe arrange a deal. I'll answer your questions.” Fit started slowly, brain racing as he was thinking of the dangers of discussing his past.

“Oh cool! What do you want from me?”

“In return you gotta share something about yourself. Something of equal value” Fit continued, mostly just unsure of why he was even entertaining this idea.

~~*Probably because the guy was cute.*~~

Pac perked up hearing this, he seemed to be thinking about it. Looking almost interested in the proposition, excited even. And Fit? He's not even gonna lie. He had kinda hoped that that would scare him off.

“They say knowledge is power, and who knows, maybe we can get to know each other better?” Pac said cheekily to Fit, winking at the older.

“Uh- something like that, sure.” Fit said. He was not used to making friends of any kind, but Ramón had said he should try talking to more people. This guy was kinda flirty however.

“Not here though. I don't want anyone else hearing. Follow me. I know somewhere private.” He gestured for Pac to follow.

Nodding Pac skipped up to Fit, quietly following behind the bald man as Fit led them towards a quieter part of the server.

Fit isn't quite sure why he brought someone he barely knows to his house, but to be fair, he isn't letting him in. They're sitting on top of his Lava Cast base and Pac seems to be entranced by its appearance, so there's that. Fit is sitting on a cobble slab, and Pac has pulled a blue couch out from somewhere... he's not going to question it.

“I'm thinking of making a garden here maybe,” Fit says, making small talk, sitting on a large rock.

“That would be nice, you should put flowers here too!” Pac says excitedly, pulling out a blue chair from nowhere and setting it up. He leans forward eagerly, eyes locked onto Fit’s. “Maybe roses would look good here...”

Why had Fit agreed to this again?

“Look Pac, please lower your expectations. Some of the stuff I'm not going to talk about, because I'm not allowed to. If that's disappointing, feel free to leave now but that's how it's going to be.” Fit said, trying to be stern, ignoring the way Pac just nodded eagerly.

Does nothing phase this guy?

“Sim! I mean yes.”

“Okay! I always wanted to know, how did you end up in 2b2t? Were you born there or were you brought there? Or were you held hostage? We could never tell and you never spoke of anything prior to the wastelands.”

Fit blinked. Well that one wasn't too hard to answer.

“Starting from the very beginning, eh? Well... Some context is needed. I have very few memories of my childhood. From what I know my parents lived on 2b2t. They escaped and had me. I was given up as a child when they went back to fight. I spent most of my early childhood in an isolated orphanage, on a dummy server. I don't remember them, and no one wanted a kid from an Anarchy server. They all thought I was diseased, or too much effort.” Fit said recalling his very patchy childhood memories.

“Anyway, the staff started getting annoyed with me using up resources so I just left once I turned 13 and went to 2b2t looking for my family. It was only when I got there that I realized a few things. Firstly I was now trapped there, and secondly, I didn't know what they looked like or their names. I pretty much just focused on surviving, never did end up meeting them. Met some cool people though.” Fit finished. He wasn't going to bother going in depth about it. “What about you? Did you have a nice family, a picket fence and a fancy house? Maybe a dog?”

Pac's eyes widened for a second. Fit almost felt a bit guilty with his choice of words, but it was a fair trade.

“I-I think I did. One day when I was very young my parents got me all dressed up. They took me to a place and said they would be back. I was young and naive, and thought they meant it. It was an orphanage.” Pac said with a bit of sadness, eyes dimming slightly.

“Oh that's fucked up,” Fit said quietly.

Pac nodded and continued. “Everyday I would wait for them to come back. I waited until I was about seven and that's when I met my brother; Mike,

you've met him before. I stopped waiting then. My family would never bring home two kids." Pac smiled softly thinking of the memories.

"One time we woke up to the news that he had been adopted. I was happy for him, he could have a family! They returned him after less then a week, apparently he started biting people and was uncooperative. He said he didn't want to go anywhere unless I went too, and the adults didn't want me because I was older. The staff didn't like that he 'threw away a family for some kid' and started being nasty to both of us. He kind of shut down, barely speaking and avoiding others, so I kind of grew up quick to protect him. We knew I would get kicked out at fourteen so the night before my birthday we both left. Since we were twelve and fourteen, people didn't expect us to be good at stealing until it was too late. We never stopped. *Passa Tudo*." Pac said smiling like he knew a secret.

Fit was honestly surprised. Pac had grown up similar to himself, however he had the memories of actually being abandoned. That's rough. Maybe he was lucky not to have many memories of his family.

"Yeah, I understand. I also needed to live like that at some points. It's very similar to how it worked in the wastelands, you would either kill or steal to survive. When I was a kid, I know it's kinda hard to believe, I was actually a scrawny kid that couldn't win any fights. I had to steal a lot during that time."

"Seriously? You? You're huge! Honestly Fitch, you are very Fit!"

"Haha thanks Pac, but it took a lot of working out to be able to get to a size where people would think twice before attacking me. Bit hard in the wastes and everything."

"The lack of food, yeah?" Pac questioned.

"Yeah... food.." Fit said in a weird way.

“Yeah. I never was able to get big. Maybe it was the bad diet? I don't know.” Shrugging Pac leaned back a bit. “Least I had Mike. Even if we were hungry, we had each other”

“Sometimes looking back I wish I'd had company. It was.... Lonely out there sometimes. Maybe if someone else was there all the time I would have actually slept decently.”

“Wait, were you alone the whole time? How many years?” Eyes widening, the Brazilian leaned forward again.

“Oh no no. I did have allies.... So to speak. People I trusted. Basemates..” Drifting off slightly, Fit looked a bit more distant. “I ran into Phil back then, he had a blonde teenager and a Ram hybrid with him. They were just there to see the sights so I showed them around.”

“Basemate? What's that?”

“Oh I forgot. It's a more...2b2t term. Varied meanings, but i mostly go off the logic, its someone you trust enough that they know where you sleep. You are risking perma-death with that, getting trapped in a respawn death cycle of nightmares. Sometimes you put your spawn points together, but it's rarer.”

“Have you ever done that? With someone?”

“Once. During an incursion. I paid the price for that...” Fit trails off.

Pac personally isn't sure if Fit was betrayed by an ally or something else happened. It feels a bit too personal to ask now.

“Yeah I used to trust people too easily. Mike didn't, but I just wanted to see the good in people. After an incident in a prison I finally learned that some people just want to gain your trust to abuse it. Sometimes they got hurt, but it was mostly us. That was hard to learn. Harder to not feel guilt over it.

I'm still working on that." He finished, more solemn than originally planned.

Awkward silence radiated in the air. Both men realized that already, these answers were getting deeper then they initially thought they would.

"Uhhh anyway, anything else you wanted to ask?" Clapping his hands, Fit stood up and paced in a small circle trying to burn the nervous energy off.

"Oh-Oh yes! What would you say was the coolest thing you ever saw on 2b2t? If you had to choose?"

"Oh that's a more chill subject. Uh, going to be real with you, anything cool i saw you probably heard about through my broadcasts. Walls of lava that stretch as far as you can see, gigantic pyramids made of every material you could imagine and a lot of religious figurehead statues. There was a valley filled with them one time... Honestly the coolest thing was the people who lived their lives there and somehow managed to stay human. Not many of them are around on 2b2t but you would see them every now and then, coming up with new ways to defy the server gods."

"Oh.. yeah i forgot about the culture. I suppose most big things don't last too long there, huh?"

"Yeah, it's the 2b2t lifecycle. So I'm curious. What did you do to even end up on that ship to get here?"

"Oh. I don't... I don't really remember. We were like, just hanging out in our safehouse, then some weird gas filled the room. Next thing I know we're on a boat with Cellbit and Felps. Felps fell asleep at the wheel and crashed us here. I don't even know why we were there."

Fit snorts a little at that information. Pac seems nervous with his next question however. "Do-do you ever miss it? The chaos? The server?" Pac asks cautiously.

Nodding to himself, the bald man chooses his words before speaking. “Sometimes I think I do. I’m pretty sure I just miss the fact there were no rules there. Some of the stuff here is a bit.. Odd. But I have Ramon now! He wouldn't be in a safe space there. He’s more important to me then the weird as fuck government here. Definitely a trade off I'm okay with. It’s also nice to be able to sleep longer. I used to sleep in shifts, 30 minutes here, an hour there. Now it's a bit safer, I haven't been this well rested in... well ever.”

Nodding as well, Pac recalled meeting the little mustached egg. His thoughts drifted to Richas, his own son. It was all so new to him still. “Yeah, Richarlyson actually has a stable setting to be raised in. Much as I miss the things Mike and I did, I’m happy Richas has a chance to be a kid. He doesn't have to grow up quickly like I did.”

“Yeah. The eggs have each other, and an army of Tios and Tias that love them. They’re decently safe.”

“Yeah unless there's a bull around. Poor Richas. Uh-uh, am I allowed to ask what took your uh-” Pac gestures to Fit’s metal arm. Fit appears to freeze up for a second before shaking his head.

“Ehhh It’s a long story. Don’t want to bore you with the details. Let’s just say lots of explosions and I got a little clumsy and a heap of stuff got blown away, including my arm.”

Pac's mind hearing this, immediately conjures up the mental image of Fit, shirt getting shredded off him in a battle. Where did his armor go? That doesn't concern Pac. He wonders what it would be like to see Fit shirtless. God his body would be so nice....

“What was that?” Fit asks, frowning.

“Uh I said nice. I mean that’s not very nice. Haha.. You didn't deserve that Fitch, you’re a nice guy.”

“You gotta understand Pac. I'm not a *nice* person. I did what I had to do to survive. There was often a lot I wouldn't broadcast. I did lots of bad things, and especially during the incursions I killed a lot of people. Losing my arm was probably deserved.”

That's hot.

Snorting Pac decides to shatter Fit’s first impression of him, “And you think *I* am any better? I literally went to jail, a high security one, with *murderers*, and I escaped. I almost killed my *brother* because I was manipulated too easily! I’m not the nicest either.” Crossing his arms, he’s surprised how quickly Fit replies.

“I killed newspawns over and over. I trapped people in lava and cooked them alive! I literally ate people to survive!” Throwing his arms in the air, Fit tries to raise an eyebrow in a ‘so there’ way.

“I literally GOT EATEN!” Pac said, standing up dramatically.

“Haha, very funny. Nice joke Pac” Fit said with a scoff. Watching Pac roll up his pants’ leg he pales quickly, taking a step back. “Whoever did that was fucked up. I hope you gave them hell.”

“Something like that. I think he killed himself. We left him on an island with a gun and one bullet. He wasn't very happy about that. I hope if he survived he got very good therapy.” Pac nodded with attitude. Fit just looked at him in confused horror, stunned completely by how real the conversation got.

“Jesus, Pac. I hope he's dead. You can't come back from that shit. He at least knocked you out beforehand, right?” Fit asked, getting horrified at the lack of a reply. “He did. Please, say he did.”

“Ehhhhhh, that doesn't matter. I don't like to talk about it. So wait what actually took your arm off? I don't think I caught that.”

“Uh... End Crystal explosion. Sorry, I'm not comfortable talking about it much more than that.” “That's understandable. So is anyone waiting for you back on 2b2t?”

“WHAT?!”

“I asked who was that guy who had your back on 2b2t!” Pac lied with a nervous chuckle, secretly enjoying how red Fit had gotten. “Your basemate?”

“I could have sworn you said... “ Fit narrowed his eyes, Pac's face being the picture of innocence. “We’re not talking about them. How did Mike feel after the whole, ‘you trying to kill him thing?’”

“I-” Pac was cut off by rain hitting him in the face. Dark clouds had started rolling in during the time they had been talking there, and now it seemed like a rare storm was brewing. Thunder echoed distantly, and Pac pointedly chooses to ignore how Fit seems to pale at this.

Fit stood up, and motioned to Pac to follow him to the elevator. Wordlessly, they went down to the bottom of his base, before he showed Pac a hidden elevator. Stepping on it, Pac was stunned he was transported to a secret cave underground. Fit seemed to relax once they were underground, weather completely silent.

“Sorry about that. The thunderstorms electricity messes with my hearing aids’ ability to connect to the translator services! Just wanted to avoid that.”

They both knew he was lying. Pac wasn’t going to bring it up.

Looking around its very basic inside. A bed is set out in the middle of the room, very obvious to anyone who stumbled in. Pac walks towards it, poking it with his fingers, before turning to Fit who is just standing there watching him.

“So is this where you actually sleep or is this your decoy bed?” Pac asks the bald man who pretends to look shocked before shaking his head.

“I forgot you learned from me. I think you already know the answer to that question.” Fit said, crossing his arms almost defensively.

“So... Do I have to come back later in the night to see the other one?” Pac said, leaning in to the other man before pulling away and giggling at Fit’s panic on his face.

“Calma calma!” Fit said turning away, the panic he initially felt rushing away with Pac's giggles. “Just follow me ok? Keep your hands to yourself unless you wanna lose them.” Pac nodded and followed Fit.

He’s got a nice ass too. Damn.

“Pac I AM BEGGING YOU. TOUCH GRASS. STOP.” Pac's brother somehow managed to make it sound like he was going to cry over the mental link.

“Oops. Desculpe...you just had to be there.”

Fit mentally sighed leading the Brazilian man into his little ‘living room’. There's really not much here apart from like- one couch, but he knows Pac’s brought his own chair. He also chooses to ignore how Pac jumps away and starts looking around when he catches him staring at his ass.

Fit is glad Ramon chose to sleep through today. He doesn't need his baby boy getting any ideas.

“So, where were we?” Fit motions to Pac to sit opposite him, which he does very quickly, pulling out a blue couch again.

“Oh. Yeah uh. Post prison. Haha.” Pac swallows awkwardly. “Prison changed both of us. Mike had to start going out alone to get supplies for

us. He made my legs for me and helped me relearn how to walk. I struggled a little but.. He was like.. Always there you know? Maybe he was trying to pay me back for how I looked after him when we were younger? I'm not sure. He started being super overprotective. My first therapist nearly got punched by him because they suggested our relationship might be a detriment to our being able to heal. We didn't really try therapy after that. I remember when I broke my first leg Mikey was pissed. I mean.. I was being dumb."

Mike was sleeping. He's done so much for Pac lately, that Pac feels he owes his brother. Sneaking out of the small warehouse they've been hiding in, he limps towards the market area. Maybe he can get some food for them to share? Less stress on MIke tomorrow? Prove he's not useless.

It's cold and dark. Pac still isn't used to this leg. It doesn't matter.

It's easy to steal. Always will be for him.

Until it isn't.

He trips over nothing, a rock or a pebble maybe, and the shopkeeper is aware now of his missing wares. Chasing him down, not stopping. They're pretty high up now, the man is still furious.

He has to jump. He's made this jump hundreds of times before. It will be fine!

He's falling.

He's not fine.

Mike doesn't let him out of his sight for two months.

Pac just zones out reminiscing. Fit raises an eyebrow, "How did you break

it? Those are usually quite sturdy. From what I've seen, you guys are pretty creative, I can't imagine you making a faulty one."

"Ehhhh.. I slipped and fell." Pac says, rather dismissive, shaking his head.

"Really? That's it?" Fit says, staring straight at him, rather deadpan.

Pac awkwardly laughs, starting to blush under the scrutiny. "Haha well... It was like a *few*stories up, haha. The other guy was *super* mad but still not as mad as Mikey. When he found me he got super red!! Mikey almost chained me to the wall because I snuck out. It was hilarious!!"

"Has anyone ever said you might be an adrenaline junkie? You seem to be always getting into trouble." Fit said, shooting a look of alarmed concern at the other.

"Maybe, but *like*... I quit therapy so I don't know. It's all good now! Haha.. Anyway, do you still have anything from 2b2t? It would be so cool to look at the different styles of tech, examine it you know?" Pac said, trying to change the subject.

"Uh-huh. Nice try Pac. I'll humor you *for now,* but I'm keeping that in mind. All I'm going to say is; you do have a kid now, so remember your actions affect more than just you and Mike. You don't want Richas following your behavior and getting seriously hurt do you?" Fit said sternly.

Pac's smile shrunk. "I know. A-after the bull... Mikey and I..." he breathed in.

Fit suddenly remembered again that Richarlyson had already lost her first life. He had already experienced the loss.

"I'm sorry, I was a bit harsh-," he started, cut off by Pac waving a hand up to pause him.

“Não não. You're right in a way. Mike and I felt so helpless with the bull. We realized how quick and sudden life happens here. However, we can't just.. change core parts of ourselves. We're still trying to find that... balance, I think the word is?” Pac said, more serious than anything else he had said today.

Fit nodded. “Balance is the word, yes. I'm still sorry. Losing one of your child's lives sucks.. uh.. so, you wanted to see something from 2b2t yes?”

Pac cheered up quickly hearing that, eagerly nodding.

“Look, I still have bits of my transmission radio, but it's inside my arm here. You can come over and have a quick look, but no pictures and minimal touching. I don't mind killing you if you go against that.” Fit said, trying to pretend to be scary again.

Pac nodded eagerly, hands flapping back and forth, stimming on the spot. “Okay here you go.” Fit sighed, holding his arm out.

Pac raced over, gently touching Fit's metal arm.

“Oh! Can you feel that?” He asked, checking before he went any further.

“Ehhhh. I can like, feel the pressure but that's about it. I don't feel pain, or temperatures. And it's very dull.” Fit explained, held in place.

“Hmmm interesting. Oh there's some panels here! Please show me which one I don't want to overstep?” Fit pointed to his radio area. “Obrigado Fitch.”

Pac treated his arm with care and respect, eagerly just examining it all with his own two hands and eyes.

“Wow, some of this is *ancient*! It's so cool to see it all still working so well! Have you ever wanted to upgrade any of it?” He asked curiously.

“Upgrade? You can do that? I was told I was stuck with it all.” Fit said, scratching the back of his neck awkwardly.

“Sim! Mikey and I got pretty good with upgrading technology! We didn't have much in the way of money so good parts were hard to come by. We made do, if that makes sense? If you ever want an upgrade or need a repair you can always come to us. I-if you want to, you know.” Pac said, getting shy at the end. He stepped back from Fit's arm. “Obrigado Fit. I know you're not really comfortable with me looking so I'm not going to uh- overwalk it.”

Fit smiled. “The word you're looking for is overstep, but thank you. I'll... think about your offer.” Pac smiled wide, beaming at the other.

“Thank you for everything today Fitch! It was nice to hear about 2b2t!! Mike needs me to help with some stuff on Imortalyson so I'm going to go help him. I promise I won't tell anyone!!!” Pac said, pulling his warp stone out at a more relaxed pace.

Fit felt himself relax slightly but also felt strangely sad that his new acquaintance *(friend???)* was leaving.

“It was.. nice talking to someone about it. But don't expect me to be like... some open book with you now, okay? I got an image to maintain. I need to be Ramon's cool mysterious dad. Don't ruin that for my son, got it?” Fit said, hiding a smile.

“Sim! Yes.. I can't ruin it for *Ramón*... yes...” Pac giggled. “Tchau Fitch!” Pac disappeared in a swarm of purple particles.

Fit watched the particles dissipate, breathing in silently.

Once this storm was over he was going to go looking for Rose bushes, some on top of his roof might look nice. For no reason.

He wasn't trying to impress anyone.

Nope.

"Felps, are you okay with walking me down the aisle at my wedding? Obviously Mikey is my best man, but I don't want *Cellbit,* walking me down you know?" Pac said, laying face down on the ground, next to his brother who was trying to work on upgrading his communicator. Felps was leaning on a tree, hanging out with the other two.

"Pac you have a problem. He barely knows you. You don't even know if he's *you know..."* Felps said, rolling his eyes at the other.

"Nah, I can *feel it.* You know?" Pac whined, rolling around on the ground.

"I don't want to know what you're feeling about these men, or where you are feeling them." Felps said, listening to Mike sigh out loud, obviously done with the conversation already.

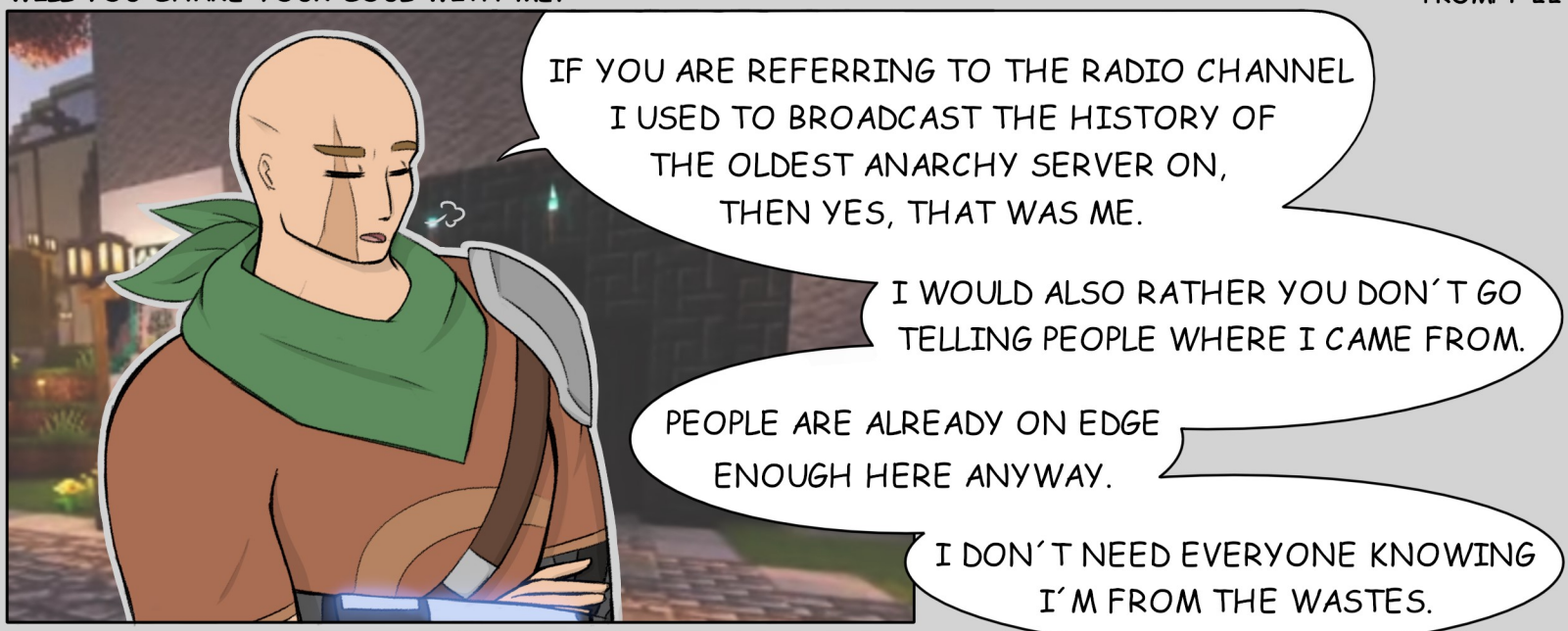
"We're going to have roses. And our kids will walk down the aisle and Fit will-" Pac started explaining out loud before stopping, unintentionally transmitting to his brother the thought of being held in Fit's arms.

Mike silently warped away, leaving Pac with Felps who just stood up, also done with Pac's bisexual crisis.

"I'm going to bed for a month. Get a grip Pac. For my sake." Felps said out loud, walking away from the bright red Brazilian man, frozen in place hugging himself.

Maybe I would carry him?

A SPY?!
HOW...
HOW DO YOU KNOW
ABOUT THIS STUFF??
R- RADIO S- STATION...
hey are you ogling
my muscles right now?
N- NOPE!
HE´S BOLD...


IF YOU ARE REFERRING TO THE RADIO CHANNEL I USED TO BROADCAST THE HISTORY OF THE OLDEST ANARCHY SERVER ON, THEN YES, THAT WAS ME.
I WOULD ALSO RATHER YOU DON´T GO TELLING PEOPLE WHERE I CAME FROM.
PEOPLE ARE ALREADY ON EDGE ENOUGH HERE ANYWAY.
I DON´T NEED EVERYONE KNOWING I´M FROM THE WASTES.

I´M SORRY FOR FOLLOWING YOU AROUND.
I-I uh HONESTLY JUST WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT 2b2t,
I ALWAYS HAD A FASCINATION FOR THE PLACE BUT I WAS TO- TOO SCARED TO GO THERE MYSELF.

BUT EVERY TIME I SAW YOU, I OVERTHOUGHT IT IN MY HEAD AND THEN GOT SCARED.

i´m sorry,
i´ll leave you alone now, Fit

WHAT AM I DOING?
PAC, WAIT.
SIM?
I- I MEAN, YES?
LOOK, I THINK WE CAN MAYBE ARRANGE A DEAL.
I'LL ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS.
OH, COOL!
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
IN RETURN, YOU GOTTA SHARE SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF.
SOMETHING OF EQUAL VALUE...

MIRO MYRSKY (OREEGAANOO)

The Secrets Shown by the Sun

Kalliflour

He doesn't know when it began, but lately Fits time spent with Pac has seemed... different.

Different in what way, Fit is still trying to figure that out. They've laughed together, fought together, comforted each other, but it doesn't feel the same as before.

In his hand were a few roses, seemingly hastily wound together at the stem, the thorns slightly pricking his finger in a way he didn't mind. If anything, he welcomed the pain to hopefully clear his mind from whatever was clouding his composure.

Before him lay his good friend, Pac, who sat in a sturdy wooden chair across from him at Star Bobby. It has been a complete coincidence that they had run into each other and decided to catch up while having a meal at Star Bobbys, though, seeing Richarlysons smirk when they bumped into each other, perhaps he had been wrong about that.

Though, at the time, Richas's expression was far from the dominant thought in Fits mind.

Pac had seemed to stumble though his words when basically shoving the flowers in Fits direction. If Fit wasn't accustomed to controlling his emotions, he doesn't know if he'd be much better, and that's what concerned him. When did Pac start infiltrating his mind like this? Pac this and Pac that... When does it stop... does he even want it to stop?

They've been in mildly awkward conversation for awhile now, bringing up

the weather or thestatus of their respective children that they know aren't too far away. Despite the light topics, the conversation became more natural the more they talked, similar to the normalcy they usually have. Wait, what? Why is this different then how we usually are? How did it become different?

Fit thoughts were wandering but he couldn’t help but take a brief pause at the sight that had been bestowed upon him. They had been talking for so long across the slightly tattered wooden table holding their half-eaten meal that the sun had started to set, casting both light and shadow onto the figure in front of him. Pac's black hair glowed from behind, his hair a bit unruly from the evening wind. The features of his face dulled in the lack of light, but were visible enough to make out; his mostly blue sweatshirt became a black silhouette with a golden outline, as if he was a deity.

A though creeped into Fits head, one that instilled him with a fear he had never felt before:

When did he get so beautiful?

The thought was brushed away to the far corners of his mind before it could do any real damage to his current composure, but Pac had already noticed a trail of light pink on the bald man's cheeks and ears.

“Wanna go now?” Pac continued, his voice somewhat sheepish. “Ramon and Richarlyson are probably up to some shenanigans with Phil.” They were both grateful when Phil showed up an hour into the dinner and asked to take care of the children, but knowing their kids, Phil might be a little in over his head.

Fit gave a soft chuckle, “Yeah... I’m half expecting to see the house half burned to the ground when I get back. I hope Phil tucked him in already”

“It wouldn't be a surprise if Chume Labs was no more,” Pac chimed in,

“I'll be sure to thank Phil the next time I see him.”

After a few lingering chuckles, Fit and Pac parted ways, going to their respective houses awaiting the mass destruction from their small but capable children.

The next day when Fit awoke, he went to Ramons house as usual, but he was still in bed when he arrived. He attributed that to the ruckus Ramon had probably caused the night before. Fit sat on the edge of Ramon’s bed and simply stared at his beautiful baby boy. He sighed a loving sigh, and his mind began to wander back to the night before.

Pac. His gorgeous dark hair, illuminated and flowing in tune to the evening wind; his eyes, the only feature he could make out through the shadows cast by the setting sun. Truly beautiful, Fit thought almost instinctively.

Before Fit’s consciousness could do any more thinking into that particular thought, Ramon awoke in a flash, suddenly upright, and staring at his father.

“How was yesterday?” the boy wrote on his chalk slate beside his bed. Ramon seems to have an insinuating look in his eyes toward his father about what happened last night.

“Now Ramon,” Fit began in a fatherly speech, “I don’t know what you’re implying here, but I had a fantastic time last night. Now you on the other hand... you may have had an even better one.”

Fit looks around the room to see a mess; there were drawings all over the walls, looking like Richarlyson’s handiwork, the remnants of pizza from the boxes on the floor, and several wrappers from a variety of different candy. “Seems you had a little bit of a party,” Fit chuckled. He was glad that Ramon was having fun, and he made a mental note to thank Phil for that later.

The day passed as usual, no unnecessary thoughts plaguing his mind to an inescapable reality he had yet to realise.

After putting Ramon to sleep to wrap up their day together, Fit finds himself drawn to the roses he had been keeping in his inventory. Pulling them out, he could see the beginning signs of withering on the lustrous red petal. A perfect spot came to mind.

He slowly walked from Ramon house to his own, traversing the outside of his lava cast home with ease. At the top, lay his garden adorned with moss and a few flowers of varying origins. He always loved this garden because he found it funny how these flowers were so beautiful and thriving atop a structure known for being in the midst of danger.

Reaching into his inventory, he pulled out the roses and pushed aside some of the dirt with his hand to make space. He covered the roots once they were securely in place and admired his handiwork.

The roses swayed in the brisk, now nighttime, air, releasing its lovely scent to those who were in range. Fit smiled at the scent, allowing his mind to wander just a bit. Unbeknownst to him, a small tint of red contrasted his skin.

A few days had passed as things normally went: Fit went on a few impromptu fishing trips at the sight of his catfish-infesting river in front of his house, a few trips to Phils to thank him for the other day, and went on a few adventures with Ramon.

Over his communication device, he got a message from Phil:

From Ph1LzA: Hey, Pac and I are planning on going to do a dungeon today, would you want to come with us?

Fit thought about it... and of course he would love to go on an outing with his two best friends.

To Ph1LzA: Sure! I'll be right over. Ramon is with Tubbo today so I'll be coming alone.

From Ph1lzA: All good! Pac said the same actually, Richas is with Tubbo too, and so I sent Tallulah and Chayanne to him as well. Might as well make it a parents day out, though I'm a little worried for Tubbo...

Fit felt a quick surge of worry and condolences for Tubbo, but it soon got washed away by his excitement to spend the day with Pac! ...and Phil.

They arrived at the entrance to the dungeon, its danger masked by the peaceful nature surrounding the door.

"You really outdid yourself Phil," Fit chimed in. He could tell it was a Nether Dungeon and those were not easy to come by.

"Well I had to for this special occasion," Phil added slyly, "Pac, you seem excited"

Pac was lingering a bit behind the group, but had a big smile plastered on his face. "Of course, I'm excited to go beat up some monsters with my huge muscles!" He joked while mimicking a bodybuilder's flexing position. They all laughed as they headed inside.

As they made their way down a flight of rugged cobblestone stairs, a few groans and sharp hisses could be heard echoing around them. Inside was a cavern adorned with nether-like patterns and decorations, all only barely visible due to the dull, blue light emitting from the soul lanterns. Despite the danger in front of them, it was quite a beautiful environment.

Before they could fully take it in, a blazing fireball shot at Fit, just barely missing his cheek. If he had hair, it would have most definitely been seared and singed. Just as he was about to make a remark about how 'this is going to be a sinch,' 6 more blazes appeared in front of them.

An array of firing balls flew toward them at high speeds, rendering conversation impossible while their trained muscle memory kicked in. Fit was in his element, dodging with ease; looking for the perfect opportunity to strike.

In a quick glance behind him, he took in the state of his other companions on this adventure: Phil seemed to be doing okay simply dodging the fireballs, knowing Fit will probably put an end to them soon, while Pac was using a shield to block the attacks. Pac, while stepping backward, seemed to hit a loose rock on the floor, and he tumbled backward.

Completely disregarding his previous mission, he hurried to Pac, in an attempt to stop his fall. Though, that day, the rock won twice. Fit's foot collided with something and next thing he knew he was on ground, a fireball shooting directly towards his face.

Before he could even think of a next move, a figure moved in front of him as he saw the sparksfrom the fire dissipate into the shield. Illuminated by the sparks, the figure was impossible to mistake, Pac. Pac's grip on the shield was strong and his legs were sturdy on the ground; unmoving. Fit watched as the disappearing embers danced around the muscles dotted with droplets of sweat of the man in front of him. "Are you okay, Big Boy," Pac jokes in their usual ways."

He was genuinely speechless. His mind was filled with words he wouldn't dare to speak aloud.

After a quick beat, Phil coughed, breaking the moment. He held a few blaze rods in his hands from the now dead blazes. Fit got up clumsily but soon gained his composure in an eye roll after another of Phil's signature 'call out' coughs. He had no idea how he looked at the moment, but he tried to stay ahead of the group to hide whatever was making his face warm.

They finished the rest of the dungeon without incident and made their way to a nearby cliff, overhanging a meadow. After a long day, they sat

exchanging jokes and laughing amongst each other. Once again, in the later hours of the day, the sun gave in to its daily descent and began its departure from the sky.

Pac glowed, outlined in the marigold light.

Breathtaking, the only word Fit could think of at the moment... and then it clicks. It's all clicks.

He enjoys watching Pac's hair float as if it were weightless in the wind, he is knocked down 80 IQ points when looking at Pac's muscles, he sees a god reborn in the glowing silhouette he thanked the sun for creating, he loves spending time with Pac, loves being around him, sharing all the parts of him he wanted to keep hidden because... he likes him. It all made sense.

Phil was watching the two in silence, a smirk on his face, on Fit hasn't released yet, or else he would put an end to it.

"I'm going to be right back, I saw some flowers I would love to get for Lullah a little bit ago and I want to get them before it gets too dark," Pac interjected into the silence.

As Pac walked off, Phil turned to Fit and pointed at his own cheeks, giving very clear implications to Fit. Fit's scoff quickly turned into a sigh and he adorned a very genuine face towards Phil.

"I think I might... like him," the words tumbled out of Fits mouth. They weren't ones to keep secrets, and Fit wanted Phil to know so he didn't have to be alone in his feelings.

"You think?!?" Phil said loudly yet jokingly, "you've been eyeing the poor man since you first laid eyes on him, I'm surprised it took you this long."

Fit felt a bit offended that was rooting in his current embarrassment. He messaged Pac that he would be heading home and told him to enjoy his

night. Before warping away, he eyes seemed to involuntarily side eye Phil as the purple particles whisked him away.

Fit got a message from Tubbo detailing that all the kids would be sleeping over at his place tonight, so he had the night to himself.

He slowly walked over to his bed and flopped face first into the firm mattress. His thoughts ran wild. It was easy before being around Pac when he hadn't made that realisation, but there was no hiding now. He wouldn't be around without spewing the words 'I like you' or even more.

He rolled over onto his face and covered his face with his hands. He thought, in the words of Tubbo, *it's joever.*

The following morning, Fit snuck into Chume Labs to leave a small book in a chest in Pac's room. He didn't have the courage to even type him the words through his communicator in fear of having to respond, so he did the next 'best' thing.

Night came quickly for them both. After sending the invitation, Fit was nervous the whole day. It wasn't that he was dreading the rendezvous, he simply was afraid of the outcome and what he would have to say.

At the base of his lava cast home, Pac came from the darkness into view wearing clothing different to his usual attire. As opposed to a deep blue hoodie, he wore a white button up and black pants that were much fancier than anything Fit was wearing.

His nervousness peaked at the thought of being underdressed, but it faded when Pac began the conversation. "So.., what did you want to do tonight?" Pac stated, coyly looking up at the taller man.

"Uhh, I was hoping that you could follow me for a second," the words poured out of Fit's mouth clumsily. Fit lead back up the outward of the lava cast, on the moss covered roof, until they reached the top. Flowing

delicately in the wind was the rosebush that Pac had left him not too long ago.

“Is that-” Pac starts as he notices the flower, his expression visibly changing from curious to mischievous.

“No! Uhhh...” Fit quickly interjected before Pac could finish. “It’s..,” Fit cursed his brain for not being able to come up with an excuse. “Yeah... that’s the flowers you gave me”

He could feel his cheeks heating up.

Pac moved forward toward the roses and took one into his hands. Kneeling down, he took a large inhale as the smell of roses filled his lungs.

Once again, Fit was left speechless.

Pac turned to Fit, the moon in the night sky vaguely illuminating his bright and soft smile.

It was now or never. “I–,” Fit started, choking on his words. “I like you, too,” Pac cut in, his face soft and his eyes full of affection. Fit is stunlocked while blushing out of his mind. His heart feels like it’s going a mile a minute and his feet no longer feel stable. Before Fit could recover and respond, Pac, as if hearing what he just said for the first time, mimicked pulling a hoodie over his face, but there was nothing there. Then, in embarrassment, he brought his knees up and hid his face.

While regaining his senses, he laughed in endearment in how much Pac's current position reminded him of a curled-up potato bug. As Pac slowly unravels, his eyes lock on to Fit’s.

A few moments pass in silence before Fit finally gets the words out: “I like you.” He quickl averts his eyes and says it again, in case he didn't hear the first time, “I like you... so much.”

Fit looks back to find Pac smiling the most he had ever seen. Pac got back up and started slowly walking toward Fit, a glint in his eyes. Fit recognised this glint, he had seen it before many times. Oh. He thought. Pac had known for a while, hadn't he.

Reciprocating Pac's movement, Fit put his hands around the back of Pac's neck, his hands woven into some of Pac's hair. A small breath left his mouth as he whispered the words, "can I?"

Pac took this chance as an invitation he had been waiting for for months. He grabbed the Pac of Fit's shirt and pulled him into a long, deep kiss. After a considerable amount of seconds, they broke apart, smiling.

"You have no idea how long I've wanted to do that," Pac giggled and Fit would make sure he would not be making Pac wait anymore.

They sat on the ledge of the roof for hours, talking about whatever came to mind. Pac moved a hand to Fits knee as he used it as leverage to land a soft peck on his cheek. This rendered Fit utterly defenceless and unmoving. "Okay," Pac joked, "I'll lay of that... for now."

As the conversations continued, the sun seemed to be done its slumber as it rose into the sky, painting it all colours of the morning. Fit looked at Pac, the sun once again enveloping his figure.

"You know..." Fit started, "you look beautiful in the sun."

LAZYCAT (LAZYCATTHINGCAT)

SAB (SABIMA_07)

His Lips on You Hurt Me (And I Don't Know Why)

Aynée (iridescentpull)

To be completely honest, this was one of the best parties Fit's ever been to.

(Although, it is a very low bar to beat since Fit can't remember the last time he attended a party that did not include blood, dead bodies and torture.)

(He'd much rather not think about that too hard.)

The Favela soccer field had been completely transformed for Festa Junina– bright banners were hung from the colorful stands built around the field while a large bonfire was placed in the middle, warming everyone up even though the June-sun was still burning brightly in the sky. Pac and Mike had done an absolute incredible job organizing the entire event, considering the amount of people who had come to celebrate. Fit had seen the job the pair had done, and had been completely and utterly awestruck.

During the week, they had also run around the island letting everyone know what the festivity would be and what they should wear. It had been a little hard at first, trying to gather as many people as possible for the event, but the pair had managed to get almost everyone to join in on the fun.

It was truly an impressive feat, especially considering how chaotic and disorganized the island is.

"Fit!" Cheered Pac the moment he saw the American "You made it!"

The older couldn't help but smile at the other's cheeriness. He had learned

not to be suspicious of the other's joy– it wasn't fake or to get him to lower his guard to attack or hurt him, but it was simply just Pac being himself. The male was just a genuinely cheerful and kind person, which was so unlike anyone else he had met before.

"Of course! I would never miss it!" He replied truthfully, crossing his arms and giving Pac a quick look. "You look great!"

Pac laughed, rubbing the back of his neck embarrassedly. It was clear he wasn't used to getting compliments. The Brazilian had traded his usual blue hoodie and blue jeans for a blue long-sleeved shirt, a pair of gray jeans, a brown vest and some black boots. He had a red handkerchief tied around his neck, and some gold decorative buttons and pins on his vest. His black hair was messy, probably by the amount of times Pac had anxiously run his fingers through it, and he looked absolutely radiant under the sun.

Pac looked very nice.

"Thank you!" The male said, smiling at him. "I'm glad you think so! You also look very good!"

Fit smiled at him, a bit embarrassed. He hadn't really given a lot of thought to what he was going to wear– he just grabbed the first pair of overalls he found in his house (which were a bit dirtied thanks to one of Ramon's dirty shirts laying on top of it) and a checkered red bandana that was probably stolen from the other's house.

"Thanks." He said, before glancing around the field. There were already so many people there, and Fit felt a bit overwhelmed by it all. He could recognize Phil talking to Etoiles on one of the corners, and Ramon was already excitedly talking with Leo nearby one of the stalls. It was strange, but seeing everyone there brought him a sense of peace. The island, the people living in it, weren't all that bad. "So, what's the plan?"

Pac smiles, hands resting on his hips. "The plan is to have some fun!" The other said, eyes sparkling with excitement. "Okay, but the plan is to wait for everyone to get here. Then me, Mike and the other Brasilians will group everyone up in the church to explain Festa Junia, and then play some games!"

Fit laughed, crossing his arms. "Sounds like you'll be busy today."

"I will, probably! But it will be so worth it!" The Brazilian quickly looks around, before his brown eyes stop at something behind him. Fit raises an eyebrow at that, but Pac only gives him a smile. "Want me and Mike to give you a tour? I know you were here when we were building it, but you've probably never actually seen everything we've built!"

The American's mouth widens. "Sure." He says, laughing at the beam he gets in response. He's pretty sure there's not much to see– the field isn't exactly a huge area, but he's not one to say no to spending some more time with Pac- and Mike too, of course. The duo are a genuine joy to have around, especially since Ramon likes them a lot.

The black-haired male grabs his wrist and pull him to the back of the field, where MIke is talking to Jaiden about the mechanisms they built on the Christ the Redeemer statue. The brown-haired Brazilian greets him before roping them into the conversation, talking all sorts of things about create mechanisms and the physics that come with it. Fit tries to understand it as much as he can, but he's a little out of his element here.

Once Pac realizes Fit's a little lost, he nudges the other male to join them on the tour of the field. The four of them walk around the soccer field, taking a look at the stands and the games being built. There are a few food and drink stands, the aromas of the delicious foods filling the air. Mike offers him some beer and some corn bread. The beer is a bit bitter, but it goes very well with the sweet bread. Mike gives him a small wink, which makes him realize that the male knows about his alcohol tolerance.

Eventually, they come across a pink stand with red hearts as decoration. "Oh? What's this?" Fit asks, raising an eyebrow at the disgustingly pink tent. Pac has the decency to look embarrassed, but the brown-haired male just laughs.

“It’s a, um, kissing booth.” Pac murmurs, looking down as he plays with his fingers. He shoots Mike a glare when the other laughs. “We thought I'd be a fun addition."

The American hums, staring at the stand with a curious expression. "Well, probably needs some testing, no?"

He doesn't really think about what he said until he notices Pac's blushing face and his soulmate’s cackles.

"What– I meant–" Fit starts, flushing red and hiding his face in his hands. He's such a fucking idiot, how could he say that. Pac's his friend and he just implied that–

Pac laughs, rubbing his neck. "It's fine! I, um, understand what you meant!" He says, voice a bit higher than usual. Fit nods, looking down. He should have kept his mouth shut. "Anyway, we should get back to the others!"

Mike is still laughing as they walk back to the bonfire, but Pac's arm around his shoulder manages to calm him down. He looks at the Brazilian, noticing how he's still blushing a bit.

He doesn't say anything.

(But, he does think about it for a while.)

Once all the islanders have arrived at the field, Pac and the other Brazilians gather everyone at the church. After explaining what the celebration is about, giving everyone interesting facts about the celebration and

answering questions, the festivities continue with a couple of weddings.

Fit and Ramón just stay in one of the corner benches in the church, watching the chaos unfold. Ramón giggles and comments about everything, while Fit simply listens and responds when appropriate. It's a little strange, how relaxed they are during a party, but it's the norm for the island. Fit could get used to it.

After the impromptu weddings and the mass, the celebrations continue in the football field. Fit, Ramón and the rest of the islanders play, scream and laugh until the sun sets, and the bonfire lights up the night sky.

Fit laughs as he takes another swing of his beer, leaning against the wall next to the stand. Phil's telling him something about the potato wall while Ramón, Chayanne and Tallulah play in the mechanical bull in the corner. The rest of the islanders are in the different game and food stands, talking and playing together.

Fit can't honestly remember the last time he had this amount of fun.

"Oh my god." Fit hears Phil say, and his gaze immediately travels towards whatever Phil is staring at, who's currently staring at something on the other side of the field. Fit follows the other's line of sight, eyes widening when he sees what's happening.

Pac is in the kissing booth, face being gently held by Felps.

They're kissing.

Like, *really* kissing. Lips on lips, touching.

The American feels his chest ache.

"Damn, they are really going at it." He hears Phil comment as they watch the pair pull back, giggling, before calling over Bad so he can take a picture

of them. Fit watches as they kiss again, and the way Pac smiles at the other Brazilian as they pull back.

He frowns, looking away as he feels his stomach drop. Why dies he feel this... this ache in his chest? It's like a knot is tied around his heart, and is being pulled tighter and tighter. He can't really describe it, but it hurts and makes him angry and-

"Mate, you okay?" Phil asks, and the older snaps his gaze towards him. The man is giving him a confused look, and it's only then Fit notices the frown and his crossed arms. "You look kinda mad."

"Yeah, yeah. I'm fine." He says, and even he can notice the slight annoyance in his voice. It's enough to make the Australian raise an eyebrow, and Fit sighs. "I'm just a little tired, I can't remember the last time I stayed up this late."

The British male gives him a look but decides not to press. "You're getting old." He teases, laughing when Fit slaps his shoulder in mock anger. "Wanna go to sleep, gramps?"

Fit scoffs. "Says you– I can literally see your bones desiccating, grandpa."

Phil laughs and punches his arm, and the American joins in, bickering back and forth until Phil pulls him up, dragging him out of the beer stand and towards the bonfire. Cellbit's waiting, ready to start a new game. He can still see Pac and Felps in the corner of his eyes.

He ignores the way his stomach turns. He doesn't understand why he hates the way Pac giggles into Felps' shoulder, face bright and dusty pink. It's none of his business.

He doesn't think about it too hard.

He decides not to think about it at all.

LYCAN (LYCANGELIC)

PLUTÃO (PLUTOLIVER)

NATH (NATHIYYYYY)

I've Lost People Too

Tulip (twoheadedtulip)

Content Warning for vomit, blood, death, descriptions of death, and violence.

Vermin, trapped beneath the hammer of a rat trap, unable to scurry away. Necks broken. Limbs writhing. Bodies falling into stillness. But it is not I who holds the smoking gun, it is those you call friends. Those you call family. Their victory calls for your end. This time, there is no return. And soon you shall call me your master.

There is a moment of regret, like his stomach had been torn from the fabric of his trembling figure, blood rushing to his head, eyes wet and hazy.

No, not just regret, grief. The kind of grief that turns you inside out and leaves you hollow.

The ocean drew in and out, barely touching the tips of Pac's boots. Each rush of water filled his ears. A methodical shush that whipped with the wind around him. Pac blinked into the distant darkness of the sky, shivering and sniffling in the cold.

The crushing in his chest crawled up his lungs and throat, forcing him to hunch over with his hands on his knees. The wetness around his eyes fell from his cheeks and darkened the sand below him. He stared into each grain as they glittered against the moon, struggling to take in a single bout of air. It felt as if everything was trapped within him, pushing at his seams until he was torn apart.

His breath was inconsistent, quick, shaky. A rough inhale. An uneven

exhale.

Tubbo's voice rang in his ears.

"I tried to tie us, I- Pac, I swear I tried to tie."

Pac made a sound in the back of his throat like a dying animal. Pained and agonized. He swayed on his feet as nausea swung through his stomach, before he eventually leaned forward and retched into the sand.

He shuddered and stumbled away from the water's edge. The ocean drew in and out. An inhale. An exhale. Still, Pac struggled.

Because of the deep rumble in the sky that declared the extermination of 12 individuals. Of the Watcher's promise for dead things to stay dead. Of Tubbo's tears and desperate apologies.

Pac collapsed backward and the noise of the world muffled around him.

He hadn't even been awake. Hadn't been there to witness the desperation or scramble for survival. Hadn't been there to help.

Now there was only the aftermath. A bitter aftermath, riddled with festering resentment and bad blood.

His eyes went cloudy, and he felt like he was drowning again.

He remembered Fit's furrowed brow and bloodied face. He remembered Mike's outburst and deranged mumblings.

He wished to see their faces again.

Wished for their voices, laughter, and conversation.

Pac fiddled with his gloves, sniffling. It was cold.

His head was swimming with a throbbing headache, his chest squeezing with a similar pain. Pac shuddered through an exhale. Everything seemed to hurt. It felt like a perpetual ache vibrating up his limbs and skin.

Pac wanted to curl up and make a home for himself in the sand; wash away into the ocean.

Mike was gone. Then Richas. Now Fit.

When things were bad during those early days of being alone, there was always hope to fall back on, some sort of reassurance that Mike and Richas would return from the hands of their captors. But it wasn't a kidnapping this time. It wasn't an imprisonment.

It was an execution.

His friends, his family—all slaughtered by the Watcher's cruel ax.

Pac used the back of his hand to wipe at his eyes. Another sniffle. Another shudder. He squeezed his eyes shut to prevent any more tears, to no avail.

The dam broke, and Pac found himself sobbing into the open air. His attempts to wipe the tears away failed as they fell over his hands and cheeks and chin. A pained noise left his lips again as he wrapped his arms around himself.

He couldn't stop crying. He couldn't stop the sting.

Pac gasped for air in-between his inconsolable tears.

He cried until he couldn't. He cried until his body felt heavy.

He cried until boots approached from behind him.

Pac turned, returning to his feet so quickly he almost fell over. His heart

beat quickly with the possibility of a fight against an opposing team member.

But it was just Bad. His robes were billowing in the ocean's breeze, tangled hair framing his face. He looked tired.

"You should come back inside," he said, glancing off into the expanse of the sea. "It's cold."

With tears still glittering over his skin, Pac looked up to the dark sky one last time. The moon.

Eventually, he would have to follow Bad back into their hidden base. Eventually, he would have to tear his eyes away from the sky. Eventually.

Team Soulfire's base was warm, but silent. A dead sort of quiet that implied a heavy dread.

Pac was sitting in one of the armchairs, picking at any stray threads, exhaustion settling deep into his skin. The kind of fatigue that weighed over your chest and stole your breath away. Bad stood in the far corner, back turned, searching a chest for materials. They had not talked since that moment on the beach.

Pac was almost happy not to speak. He was sure that if he opened his mouth to say anything, all that would escape were more cries.

He let out a low exhale in an attempt to calm the pain in his chest. The consistent nausea. If he closed his eyes to sleep, maybe all that suffering would go away. Left behind in the waking world with his grief.

Pac let his eyes droop, the exhaustion seeming to catch up. His brain numbed and his thoughts slowed to a buzz. He laid his head on the cushion of the chair and pulled his knees to his chest. There was darkness around

his eyes.

But, before sleep could take him, angry footsteps brought him away from drowsiness and into a haze.

Before him was Tina, storming from the base's entrance and over to Bad– who finally turned around. She looked angry. Furious. Tears streaked her face, and a red tinged her skin. Pac watched on as she whispered ferociously. It was something he couldn't hear, too far and too low.

Tina poked Bad in the chest with an accusing finger, before turning around and stomping away. Her eyes were wet once again.

And, as the quiet returned, so did the darkness.

Before Pac could slip into sleep, he thought of Fit and Mike again. Of Bagi. Of Roier. Of Etoiles. Of all of them.

He darkly thought of their unmoving bodies. Their blank faces. Their lifeless eyes. Pac wished for dreams instead of nightmares.

Pac wakes to a bustle. The sound of shuffling, cursing.

He blinked slowly against the warm light of the lamps, eyes landing on the form kneeling over one of the chests. Pac could tell from behind that it was Tubbo. His dirtied button up and ratty hair.

Pac sat up straight, groaning. His head felt like it was full of cotton balls, a steady ache pulsating his skull. His face fared no better. It felt raw. Red, no doubt. Stained with crusting tears.

"Oh, you're- you're awake," Tubbo said, his back no longer turned. His voice sounded off-kilter.

“Yes, uhm, good morning, Tubbo,” Pac replied. He sounded rough, quiet. Void of energy. Pac forced himself to smile. If only a little sadly. “What are you doing?”

“Just getting some stuff- uh-” The other man cleared his throat. “Me and Bad are- we’re going to Green team’s base.”

Ah. Right.

If the tears weren’t a reminder, maybe the empty space where Green team had once slept will drill the point home.

They were all...

Pac took a deep breath.

“Can I come with you?” He asked, standing up. “I just- I need to see it for myself.”

“‘Course big man,” Tubbo said. His voice still sounded... off. “Bad’s waiting up top.” Pac nodded, pushing his tangled hair back, quickly making sure he had
everything—sword, armor—before finding himself on that beach again.

The sun gleamed over the shimmering water. Bad stood by the edge, pulling a boat to the waves.

“Bad!” Pac called out, approaching quickly. “Tubbo said I could come with you.” Bad looked up briefly.

“Oh- I didn’t expect-” He cut himself off.

Pac spoke in the silence left by Bad’s awkwardness.

“Yeah, I just- I want to see if there are any- any clues, y’know?” Pac said.

“I’ll make another boat,” Bad replied, his tone a bit stilted.

Pac nodded and sat back in the sand. The sun was warm against his skin, and the smell of the sea almost calmed him if not for the continuous tumultuous grief boiling in his stomach. Pac brought his knees to his chest. He fiddled with his fingers and watched as Tubbo approached.

“Tina’s coming,” Tubbo said when he got within earshot. Pac could immediately see the slight uncomfort Bad held, before it immediately dissipated.

“That’s fine,” Bad replied. “She’ll go with Pac.”

Pac glanced up, but Bad and Tubbo were distracted by the boats as they waded steadily into the salty water. He sighed and finally stood up. As he approached his two teammates, Tina came running up. Or, fast walking. Whatever it was, it made her more intimidating. Her expression was cold. Her gait was murderous. And the grip on the sword at her hip rendered her knuckles pale.

They locked eyes for a moment. And though Pac could see that anger behind her face, there was also something else.

It was the same thing that Pac saw in himself.

Grief.

The kind that ate away at you.

Pac turned away to avoid Tina’s gaze, stepping into the wobbly boat and shifting to the front, taking a hold of the oars.

He could feel when Tina stepped in behind him. And finally, as she sat comfortably, they pushed away from land.

Tubbo and Bad were in front of them, mouths moving as they talked amongst each other. Pac could only hear their incomprehensible whispers, too far to gather what they might be discussing.

Contrarily, there was only silence between Pac and Tina. A tension that left Pac struggling to breathe. It forced him to think of their journey. What they might find in Green Team's supposed base.

Pac's grip on the oars tightened, trying to distract himself with the sound of the water splashing against the side of the boat. The shush of the ocean.

Pac controlled his breathing and embraced the quiet.

The Green Team island was lush. Tall trees and grass. Beautiful flowers and hanging vines. Nothing like Blue Team's tundra or the desert that cursed the Red Team. It was beautiful. But, empty.

Pac took a deep breath, relishing the honeysuckle and petrichor. Sweet and earthy. "Are we near the base?" Tubbo questioned, looking to Bad for answers. The demon nodded slowly. Though he seemed distracted, eyes darting amongst the trees, looking for something. Perhaps Red Team members.

You couldn't be too careful.

"We have to go deeper into the forest," He eventually said, stepping forward, leaves crunching beneath his blood-stained boots.

And as they walked, the beauty washed away in the wake of unsettlement, the quiet becoming stomach churning as tension dripped from the air and made it hard to breathe. It felt like they were being watched. Like an ambush was going to happen at any moment. Pac sucked in a breath as they crept into the shade. It was quick and made his lungs spasm.

There was blood on the ground, becoming more and more frequent the closer they got to their supposed destination. It splattered the trees and grass. And, eventually, as they approached a specific area deep in the jungle, Pac knew this was where they were supposed to be.

A sword was lodged into the ground. Red traced the blade and a green cloth was wrapped around the hilt. And just a few feet away, the dirt and grass was found to be indented. Wet with viscera. As if someone had been laying there.

Pac imagined a body struggling, flailing their limbs as they choked on their own blood. He tried to force the image away before it conjured Fit's face. Mike's face. Bad reached out and rested his hand on the pommel, tilting his head.

"This is Etoiles' sword," he said. His fingers curled around the hilt as he pulled, dislodging it from the dirt.

Pac turned away. He found himself pawing at the ground with the bottom of his foot, looking for something. Anything. Anything to take the focus away from the bloodshed. His right foot eventually hit a part of the ground that didn't feel like grass. It was more solid, dense.

An elevator.

He glanced at Bad, who was wrapping Etoiles' sword neatly around his shoulder, and then back to the ground.

Pac stepped forward so both his feet were flat against the elevator block, before instinctually going down. His world view immediately shifted from the bright green of the forest, to the dull light of a cave, sparingly revealed by a flickering torch.

The scene before him made his eyes burn. For, much like the surface, the entire area was tainted with remains. Blood dripped down stone walls. Ran

like rivers over the ground. Pac took a tentative step forward, the bottom of his shoes catching the gore. It stunk. Like metal or rotting meat. He almost hunched forward from its sheer magnitude, quickly taking his hand to cover his face.

Part of him wished he hadn't come here.

Wished the memory of this place could be erased from his muddled thoughts. It wasn't long before the woosh of the elevator filled his ears, Bad's sudden appearance forcing him to take a few more steps forward, until he was fully in the thick of the stench. Pac's eyes darted around the room again. This time, noting the little details. Another green bandana laid out on the floor. Bagi's hat tossed to the side. A pair of glasses shattered against the ground. A domino mask sitting lonely on one of the crafting tables. And... Vines crawling up the walls, dark and slimy looking. He reached out to investigate them, only to back away the next moment, anxious to even touch its pulsing mass.

If this wasn't evidence to the demise of Green Team, Pac didn't know what was. He bent down, away from the vines, and took the bandana in his hands, watching the blood—soaked into the very fabric—spill from between his fingers. It dripped over his boots and into puddles at his feet.

Tina–whom he hadn't even noticed–pushed past him. Her hands grasped for Bagi's hat desperately, holding it in white-knuckled fists. Pac mirrored her, watched her. Watched her as his stomach lurched and the smell made his head hurt and his chest wriggled with the feeling of worms. The rot made him suffocate. The rot made him see his family. Made him groan with agony, grief gripping his frame like water to fabric. Made tears gather in his eyes, but never shed.

And before him he could see Mike's twitching figure, and Fit torn to nothing. Bagi with half her head, and Etoiles' without a heart.

Their blood dribbled over the toes of his boots, sunk into soles of his feet,

and painted the skin of his hands.

“What-what is this,” Tubbo whispered, his voice was raspy, a fearful sort of confusion. The man’s fingers were up against the wall, grazing the dark twitching of the vines. A mystery. An unfinished painting of the deaths of their friends.

There was a pause.

An unanswered question.

And then-

“This is all your fault!” A voice rang among the condensed space, finally snapping Pac from his sorrow-driven hallucinations. Tina had swiveled around now, pointing with ire. Accusation. Pac followed her furious gaze, and met Bad’s eyes. His expression was unsurprised, nonplussed by the words.

Tina’s face only twisted further in the wake of Bad’s silence. Her hands shook as they fell to her sides, Bagi’s hat still in one hand.

“If you hadn’t-” She fumed. “If you hadn’t ruined that tie-” A breath. “They would still be here!”

Every word was grit through clenched teeth and heavy breath. Fueled by rage and anguish. Pac knew the feeling well.

Bad’s brow furrowed, opening his mouth to defend himself.

“I didn’t think it would end up like this,” He hissed loudly. “We always come back, Tina. You can’t blame me for what happened!”

Tina bared her teeth, but didn’t speak another word. Perhaps unsure of what to say next. Eventually she would open her mouth to speak again,

only to be quickly interrupted by Tubbo. “If it’s anyone’s fault,” He said. “It’s that fucking eyeball guy,”A tense pause. “I mean, he’s- he’s the- he’s the reason we’re here in the first place! And, infighting won’t bring Green Team back, or return us to Quesadilla Island for that matter, so- just calm down... The both of you!”

Silence.

Pac tried to still his erratic breathing by leaning against the stone of the cave and focusing his eyes on a specific part of the wall. The one which harbored that odd vine. It wiggled in a disgusting show of strangeness, as if Pac was hallucinating it in his moment of unbreathing. He quickly tore his attention away from it and back to the others with unblinking eyes, watching the tension remain and the demon’s slicing gazes meet each other. Pac needed to leave. Needed to breathe air that didn’t stink of the rotting corpses of his friends and family. Needed to leave before-

Pac stepped on the elevator and found himself atop the lush grass once again, the air tasting sweet on his tongue. He took a deep breath and found himself settling on a tree’s root. It was quiet, calm.

His head had been so overwhelmed with thoughts. A constant stream of images, filling in the blanks of Green Team’s supposed death. But the bird song of the lively forest brought him peace. A stillness that almost mellowed him into complete blankness.

He knew it wouldn’t last. That soon they would need to leave the lush island and return to base and continue this Purgatory torture. But Pac knew his heart wouldn’t be in it, knew that his hope had shattered along with the lives of those he named close to him.

He wished for it to be over. Wished that none of this had ever happened in the first place.

Wished he had been stronger, and perhaps they’d still be there.

Perhaps.

But it was too late.

Too late because of that tie. Because of Purgatory. Because of that *fucking* eyeball. Tears burned in Pac's eyes again, pins and needles running up his arms, hands clenching into fists. And in that moment he was sure he looked like Tina, for his grief, though strong, was soon surpassed by a smoldering anger. Building. Building. Building in his chest and fogging his mind.

Blood roared in his ears, a sudden and violent call for vengeance. Loud. Demanding. His nails dug into the skin of his own palms, indents left behind in stinging pain. There was no direction for his anger. Just, an explosion. An explosion that ripped at his seams and made him numb.

Pac stood up, tingling like bugs were squirming under his skin. He paced from one tree to the other, his head full of swarming emotions.

From one tree to the other.

What was there to live for if not his family? What was he to do now that they were gone? Why couldn't *he* retreat into the soothing quiet as they had?

Pac flexed his fingers, stared into the tree shrouded sky. And in the next moment, a breeze blew his hair, and the singing of a sword grazed his face.

It missed him by a thread—barely an inch from his eye. A fate only avoided when Pac thrust himself backward, hitting the tree behind him and sending shocks of pain up and down his spine.

"QUERIDINHO!"

A heavy breathing—and a voice dripping with false sweetness—plagued his

ears as he eventually came face to face with a gas mask. It was red. A deep red, almost like blood. But the eyes that stared back at him. The eyes that he could just barely make out. They were blue.

The anger he had once felt dimmed into a sudden and terrifying spark of fear. Like even the recognition of those eyes made him fall back into his old instincts.

Pac mindlessly took a step back, a cold sweat falling over his skin and a twisting nausea taking hold of his stomach.

There was a tense silence in the moments between heavy breaths, the blue eyes keeping Pac frozen. Calculating, and then crinkled. And though Pac could not see behind the mask, he could tell that the face was smiling. A fake smile. A smile laced in fury and insanity.

“Cellbit,” Pac whispered, voice low in learned terror. He felt like a rabbit caught between the maw of a towering wolf. Felt like a deer hunted by the hunter.

Felt like prey.

Adrenaline coursed through his veins, and Pac, alongside his maddening fear, became filled with a determination. Erasing his previous questions, all that rushed over his mind was the instinct to *live.*

Pac’s shaking fingers took hold of the sword at his side, and unsheathed it.

Cellbit stared for a moment. His eyes unblinking and body still. Eventually, bringing a scarred hand to his face, the man slowly lifted the mask, and threw it to the ground. His smile was toothy, curved. Almost a scowl if not for the corner of his lips twitching upward. It was unsettling, covering for stronger emotions. Rage. Grief.

Cellbit’s eyes were red-rimmed and glassy.

Pac's hand held tighter around the hilt of his sword. Cellbit copied him, smile growing wider.

And, much like a cat, he pounced.

The sword sliced Pac's arm and he just barely dodged, bringing his other up to swing at Cellbit's throat.

Pac's heart beat quickly, incessantly, pounding against his head. Every fiber at his being screamed at him to run. Screamed at him to hide so Cellbit could never find him again. He swinged, missed, and backed up into the tree behind him.

Cellbit lunged quickly when Pac stumbled. His eyes were filled with blood lust, dark intent. Pac ducked. He could hear the sword when it hit the tree, hear it lodge into the bark. He then jumped away as Cellbit dislodged the sword, swiveling in time to block Cellbit's second attack.

The CLANK of their swords rang loudly in his ears. It almost drowned out the call of a voice somewhere beyond the trees. Almost.

"Cellbit!" It yelled. "Cellbit where are you?"

Foolish.

His chances against the both of them were unlikely, especially in the wake of his crippling fear. He needed to think.

A quick decision.

Pac swung his sword from Cellbit's, turned, and darted into the brush. His feet beat against the ground as trees passed him by. He didn't look behind him, but he could tell that Cellbit was quick to follow.

"VEM CÁ!" Cellbit's voice came out aggressive, forced from his throat. It

almost sounded like it hurt. So far removed from his usual tone of sadistic playfulness. Instead it was desperate, frustrated. As if he couldn't wait for Pac to just be dead. "VEM CÁ, QUERIDINHO!" A shiver climbed Pac's spine. A cold terror.

Truly, Pac was the prey running from the predator. Mind reduced to thoughts only of escape and survival. His breath left him in quick increments.

Lungs burning.

Legs burning.

The sound of the trees.

The wind.

The footsteps behind him.

The ocean close by.

Foolish's voice.

He ran until his feet sent shocks of pain up his muscles. Until his breath could no longer leave him. Until the waves of the sea came into view. Until the footsteps became ever closer. Until Cellbit tackled him into the sand.

A sharp throbbing radiated Pac's shoulder the moment he hit the ground, having no time to register it as he was forced to grab Cellbit's arms and prevent an untimely death. For, between the other man's hands, a knife was clutched in a vice grip, a mere few inches from Pac's face. Pac could see his eyes close now.

The same as before, rage covering for grief. The man's wedding ring glinted in the bright sun.

And for a moment, Pac shared that grief. A rush of empathy for their allied emotions. A loss so great it tears you apart. That feeling of having the floor fall from underneath you. For Cellbit, a husband. For Pac, his family, a close friend.

He doesn't waver his grip. His fingers strained to stop the knife from reaching his skin. It hurt, stung. But Pac didn't give up. As if the fear fueled his determination. "MORRE!" Cellbit demanded."MORRE LOGO!"

Sweat dripped down the man's forehead, mixing with the wetness of his cheeks. Pac's hands were beginning to slip. The knife was inching closer.

"NÃO!" He hissed through grit teeth, kicking Cellbit away a few inches, enough to scramble away and back to his feet.

Cellbit followed quickly. And as Pac attempted to lunge for his sword on the ground—having fallen after Cellbit tackled him—Cellbit grabbed at his leg, effectively leaving him to trip. Even as the ground sent shocks of pain up his muscles again, Pac was not deterred, and closed the hilt of the sword between his fingers.

The moment he whipped around to face his hunter, a knife lodged in his calf. Sharp. Burning.

Pac yelled out, sending his sword down and forcing Cellbit to detach. As the other man dodged, Pac stumbled backward. Each step sent drilling pain up and down his leg. He held his sword out when Cellbit stood up, hands clenched into fists, staring Pac down menacingly.

"Isso é culpa sua," Cellbit spat, relaxing his fist and then flexing it, as if preparing to punch him. "Sua-" A pause. A humorless smile. "Todos do Soulfire têm que morrer-" Cellbit reached for his own sword, having been sheathed at his side when Pac had bolted into the woods. "Começando por VOCÊ."

Cellbit's blade met Pac's.

His mouth continued to move around words laced with ever growing fury, statements that cut just as deep as the sword itself.

"ROIER MORREU POR SUA CAUSA!" He yelled. Slash, stab, miss. Pac's mind was racing.

Slash. Miss.

Stab. Miss.

And suddenly, that anger from before returned. Fear to rage. Did Cellbit–Red Team–think they were the only ones grieving? Did they think they were absolved from their sins? "Você acha que são os únicos sofrendo? Os únicos que perderam pessoas?" He replied, voice shaking, face morphing in ire. Again their blades connected. Pac's leg was on fire. "Pierre, Tina, Tubbo, EU, todos nós perdemos alguém naquele time."

Cellbit did not answer, Pac continued.

"Você não pode culpar só o Soulfire," low, quiet, slowly growing louder and louder. "Vocês TAMBÉM são culpados."

"Cala. Sua. Boca." Cellbit finally ground out.

Pac lunged this time, ignoring the screeching of his leg and the blood that ran down it, wetting his skin and pants. His sword twisted around Cellbit's in a way that forced the other to drop it. Drop his own.

When they both hit the ground. Pac stepped forward.

And raised his fist.

And punched Cellbit across the face.

The man stumbled back, but returned swiftly. One hand caught his shirt, and the other caught the hilt of the knife as he bent down, and wrenched it free.

Pac's vision whitened out of a moment. The feeling of the knife scraping against his bone. The blood rushing. The ache became screaming agony, a fire scorching his nerves. His yell was caught between his teeth. And, when his vision cleared, he could feel the chill of a blade against his throat. Pac shivered.

The knife was pressed against his skin, and before him, Cellbit's expression was blank. Pac would die here. Throat slit.

He swallowed. Took a breath. Didn't dare move a muscle.

There was silence.

The blade inched closer, blood spilling from the tiniest of cuts.

Pac took his left hand and grabbed Cellbit's wrist. It didn't budge, not even when Pac dug his nails into the other man's skin.

"Estive esperando por isso, Queridinho," Was all Cellbit said, a smile across his face. His hand fell into position. Preparing to pull his arm back. Slice the skin of Pac's throat and mark it with blood.

Pac tightened his grip. "Você vai ter que esperar mais," He replied, before bringing his prosthetic up, and kicking as hard as he could into Cellbit's stomach.

The man doubled over, the knife falling away and relieving Pac from sudden death. And as Cellbit had before, Pac tackled him. It hurt. His leg throbbing and aching and screaming. Rivers of blood.

Pac ignored it in favor of wrestling the knife away from Cellbit's vice grip.

But the other man would not give up so easily, knuckles white around the hilt, trying to shove it into Pac's chest.

The knife between them. And then that clicking sound, a promise of approaching disaster. Wide eyes and a strong determination to end this fight as soon as possible. One of them had to die.

Though his grip did not relent, he became distracted for a second, staring at his UV for what impending doom they had.

Earthquake? Burning sun? Radioactive storm?

The point of the knife is mere inches from his heart.

Toxic Fog.

That moment of distraction.

Cellbit shoves him away. Not far, but tumbling on his ass.

In the few seconds in which Pac is left discombobulated, Cellbit wrenches another gas mask from his inventory, reaching to secure it on his face.

The exhaustion wrings Pac's muscles. Makes him slow. But still, he jerks a hand out, and grabs one of the gas mask's straps, pulling it away from Cellbit.

The air around them soon becomes thick.

Cellbit pulls back, bringing his knife up again, and attempting to slice at Pac's hand. Yet, Pac does not deter.

A game of tug a war.

Until it became painful to breathe. Until blood crawled up his throat. Until

it stung to look out into the haze of green.

Eventually Pac would pull his other hand back. Eventually he would punch Cellbit a second time. Eventually he would wrench the mask away.

Eventually he would be free from the pain.

Eventually he would breathe again.

Pac backed away, lifting his pant leg and shifting his hand to cover the opening of his skin, dripping pools of blood into the sand.

Even with the gas mask strapped to his face, he couldn't help the struggle of his own lungs. The rattle against his chest.

As he searched his inventory for gauze, he could hear Cellbit a mere few feet away. The coughing and gasping. The sound of blood against the throat. The sound of it splattering past his lips and onto the ground. Struggling. Dying.

Pac forced himself to ignore it, and shoved the gauze into the wound. It burned fiercely. Felt like fire in his limbs. But he bit the pain between his teeth instead of yelling out again, wrapping the stab wound in cloth and collapsing onto his back.

The sky swirled in green smog. A mesmerizing dance of hues.

His breathing slowed.

And he was at peace, almost.

As the body near him stopped struggling. As the pain subsided to a throbbing ache. As the fog lightened.

He laid there until the world was clear.

Pac could see Cellbit now when he stood. A twisted body, laying in the sand, eyes open with guttural pain, blood seeping from the corner of his lips.

His skin prickled, and Pac could only feel sadness, before turning away to the forest and removing the mask from his face. He needed to find his team.

The cool air felt good against his face, in his lungs. It felt good to breathe. To smell the sweetness of the forest around him, the flowers.

But it would soon be overtaken by something else.

That metallic stench. Rot.

And something else too.

He found himself near the elevator once again. There was more blood than before, oozing down the trees, at his feet. Vines had crawled around the bark now too, a quickly spread infection almost. Something twisting and unnatural.

And the victims lay before him.

Tina’s body crumpled a few feet away. Bad mangled on the ground. Tubbo stabbed through the gut.

Baghera and Foolish weren’t far either.

And they all lay motionless.

A fight had broken out, perhaps.

Chainsaws and swords and the heavy toxic air around them.

Pac only stared at the carnage, unmoving. Watching the brutality. The blood shot eyes and twitching limbs.

One body in particular caught his attention, however, the slight rise of a chest. Pac immediately kneeled before Tina's quivering form.

In her hand she had Bagi's hat. Gripped tightly, as if a lifeline. Soon her pupils would follow him, throat spasming as a low whimper left her lips, a trickle of blood following, dripping down her chin. She looked much like Cellbit in his last moments.

Pac gently grabbed her shoulder. Hopefully comforting, as she convulsed for another few seconds, before becoming completely limp. A hollow figure. Void of that light in her eyes. Pac sighed heavily. He would need to return to base. Lingering would only prove dangerous, especially with Red Team members still out there.

So he sat there for only a few seconds more. A few more moments of the copper smell. The humidity. The green of the forest around him.

Pac turned away from the rot, leaving to return to the boat he had arrived on. He wanted to leave the carnage, leave those thoughts behind.

Those thoughts in which his friends and family died that same slow death, with no one to stand by them for comfort. Lonely and cold.

Pac's boat rocked back and forth on its way back to base. His face was scrunched in pain, tears running down his chin and into the water below, waves consuming them. These moments seemed to hit him randomly. Heavy emotions that made him feel like he was drowning. A rushing ocean filling his lungs, making him choke, making him sink to the sandy floor. His grief felt inconceivable.

And Pac just wanted to lay at the bottom of the boat, let it take him

wherever the sea led. Shed his memories of this place.

He could only wish for everything to go away. Wish for his thoughts and emotions to melt and leave him. Wish for peace.

So he drifted into sleep.

Drifted into darkness.

Drifted away from his heartbreak.

It is in that pitch black that Pac heard that voice again. Overlapping and loud. A noise which threatened his head to split apart with its sheer magnitude.

A voice of the sky, dripping with mirth, amusement, cruelty.

It beckoned him, promised the world, promised him his family.

Don’t you want to see them again? Don’t you want to rescue them?

Only for a small price.

Find them, but betray the others.

Vision hazy. Head full of fog. His bandages were soaked through, seeping again into the fabric of his pants, making him feel above the clouds, floating.

Pac accepted.

And the voice laughed long and deep. It vibrated against his chest and made him hunch over. Made him fall to his knees. Made him retch into the floorless expanse of the void. The Watcher had Pac clutched in his fingers.

A puppet strung up in his hands.

The boat rocked.

Pac woke only when it finally stilled, caught on the sand of shallow waters. Like a trance, he stood and stepped into the salty ocean. It lapped his legs as he stumbled to land. His head spun in apparent loss of blood, feeling lighter and lighter in his heavy body. All he wanted was to return to sleep. Fall back into darkness.

But there was something he needed to do. A voice calling him, beckoning his movements.

So Pac limped forward, ignoring the pain, ignoring the rushing blood that squeaked in his shoes. He was so close. Close to seeing their faces and open arms.

The whispers brought him over the sandy beach. Brought him through the woods and down a cave. Cold and dark.

The pull that worked his arms and legs became stronger and stronger, but his body only seemed to grow weaker and weaker. Failing him.

Soon Pac would collapse, he was sure of it. His breathing becoming harder. His skin and muscles tingling with each step. The throbbing of his head and the slow blinking of his tired eyes.

Pac reached a hand out into the darkness, feeling the side of the cave wall to guide him. The texture against the pads of his fingers was odd. Instead of the solid feeling that he had expected, something different met his touch. Smooth, springy, almost curling around his skin. And as he kept walking, the ground felt much the same.

It felt like miles... before he finally found his destination. For the whispers that brought him were now screaming. Screaming at him to do as the

Watcher told him to do. So Pac lit a torch, and lifted it before him.

The walls were pitch-black, writhing, squirming vines of flesh wrapping around each other, inching towards Pac.

This must be what happened to those he knew.

An all consuming force, holding them and crushing them and keeping them there forever. He blinked tears away.

Only Bagi's face was visible, that and a hand reaching out, both entangled in the wriggling of the dark tendrils. Her eyes were blank and void of any life that was once there. Her mouth partially open, jaw stretched, agape. Pac takes her outstretched hand into his, feeling the chill of her skin.

He quickly tore it away in anger.

The Watcher had LIED.

He had promised, told Pac that they weren't dead. This mission was all in vain. A trick to lure him into the maw of The Watcher himself.

Pac stumbled away, wishing to erase Bagi's face from his mind and leave this place as soon as possible. As he backed away however, his foot caught on the edge of something, sending him tumbling to the twitching floor.

The torch clattered beside him. And as the fire continued to rage, the light caught his face. Pale, scarred.

Pac scrambled, watching the unmoving face of his close friend. When Pac finally got to his side, his hand glided over the man's chest, a heartbeat fluttering under his light fingers. Relief rushed over Pac the next moment, with Fit's eyes slowly opening, before widening when they landed on Pac.

His voice was raspy and low when he spoke. Perhaps from some sort of

vocal abuse. “Pac,” Fit whispered. “How did-” he swallowed. “How did you get here?” The man was trapped by the dark vines, slowly sinking into the floor. Pac grabbed his arm as if to stop him from falling any further.

“I- I- The Eye- I was- we all thought you were dead,” He forced out. His eyes were wet. “The Watcher- he told us that- that you were eliminated- that it was permanent!” Fit exhaled, inhaled. It sounded wheezy and uneven, lungs stuttering. He shifted his arm upward as best he could, forcing Pac to let go in order to grab his hand with Fit’s own. It was warm. Much unlike Bagi’s.

Their attachment, their hands entwined, it did nothing to stop the swallowing of the floor. There was no telling when Fit would be completely and utterly consumed by the dark vines, Pac left alone once again.

The thought made Pac squeeze Fit’s hand tighter.

“I’m not sure what happened,” Fit said, voice small as if hard to say the words. “I was Green Team was eliminated and then it was just darkness,” a strained inhale. “Now I’m- I’m here and I think the others are too-” a short exhale. “But I’m not even sure where we are.”

Fit tried to surge upward, loosening the vines for a moment, before they tightened again. “I’ve been trying to break free- Bagi too- but... she hasn’t... said anything in a while,” He continued, straining through his teeth as he attempted to get out again. “Here-” Pac offered, standing. He bent forwards to grasp Fit’s upper and lower arm. He dug his feet in the ground.

And pulled.

A hiss escaped Fit’s mouth, the vines appearing only to tighten and tighten. Like a snake. Still, Pac pulled.

The vines wrapped around his feet.

His calves. Over his wound. Burning his skin.

As seconds passed, it was not long before Pac was brought down to the ground, with Fit still beside him. He strained against them, to no avail. Fit laughed humorlessly.

“I guess we’re both stuck here together,” He wheezed.

Pac only inched closer instead of responding, dragging himself forward, resting his head on Fit’s arm.

His body fully seemed to shut down right then. Exhaustion and blood loss. Spotty vision, and a throbbing headache.

“Yeah,” he huffed. “Yeah I guess so.”

Fit wrapped an arm around Pac’s shoulder, pulling him close.

They were comfortable for a moment, sharing a rare second of affection. Warm. Soothing.

Pac never wanted to leave that feeling. But in the silence, the sinking, he couldn’t help but grieve the loss that would soon arrive. He had just gotten Fit and now they were both going to succumb to something beyond their understanding.

“Fit,” He whispered eventually, voice low.

“Yeah?”

“I’m sorry.”

Fit glanced down, pulling Pac up so they were practically chest to chest.

“About what?”

Pac’s face cracked into a slight smile. The man seemed to have already forgotten.

“The contract kill,” Pac explained wearily. “I did not- I did not mean for it to end like that.”

Fit almost seemed to laugh, chest shaking.

Pac smacked his arm with little force.

“Why are you laughing?” He demanded playfully. His smile was bigger now, if only a little tired.

“Nothing, nothing,” Fit snorted. “Just feel like it’s a bit late to apologize.” Pac opened his mouth to answer, only for a cough to leave his lips instead. It was rough. Knives running up and down the insides of his chest and throat.

Blood fell past his teeth and lay there on his chin.

Fit surged against the vines once more, to no avail.

“Pac?”

It sounded urgent.

There was a shake of his shoulder.

The darkness was edging about his vision.

“Yeah?” He finally replied, voice wispy, groggy.

“Stay awake, Pac,” Fit said, watery. “You gotta keep your eyes open.”

Pac tried. But, his eyes were so heavy, and his body so weightless. He sniffled uselessly. Unable to move, unable to turn and see Fit's face.

An unfinished apology.

Distant feelings.

Broken hearts.

As the tendrils drowned him, he felt that deceivement too, that betrayal. A cruel trick from the whims of their warden.

And when next Pac lifted his arms, it would be much like a puppet's. For his control was not his, and the blood beneath his fingernails neither.

In the back of his mind he would scream.

But his calls would go unheard.

Bloodshed and misery and puppets strung by black string.

Soldiers of The Watcher.

Pac wanted to curl back in on himself.

He wanted to hold Fit once more, as they had in their final moments. But wishes are scarily granted.

DAVE (LUTRAVIOLET)

JOTAEMY

A Glass of Warm Water

Tulip (twoheadedtulip)

Content Warning for Drugs, Self Harm, and Vomiting.

"Everything's going to be alright, okay Fit?" Pac had said, hand on Fit's shoulder. And Fit answered with a smile and a belief in those words. Even when it didn't settle right in his stomach. Even when something cold washed down his spine.

He didn't even let that belief waver when he learned that Pac was receiving the 'treatment'.

It was only the next morning, standing on Favela's road, did he doubt those words. Pac stood before him with a smile that stretched unnaturally over his features. It pushed into the other man's cheeks, straining the skin.

At first it was only uncomfortable. Pac was the same but... Energized. Maybe a little crazed. Laughing and jumping around and declaring the happiness of the day. It did not take long for things to devolve, however. For Pac to show gaps in his memory, for Pac to whisper and yell and claw at his briefcase full of pills, for Pac to deny and argue, for Pac to tell Fit that his own time on the earth was soon to end.

Pac had then fled in a hurry. His words were laced with anxiety, a sort of stress. When the blinding white hoodie disappeared into the distance, Fit began cataloging Pac's behavior in his head.

His erratic emotions. His constant smile. His jerky movements.

Their second and third face to face proved no better.

The same dramatic switch in positive and negative emotions. The same aching smile. The same twitching gestures.

Even with Tubbo by his side, there was no compromise. No forcing the pills away. No persuading Pac to give them up.

Nothing they could say would do anything.

Pac had constructed a wall around himself, stubborn, unbreaking. He had fully immersed himself in the reality created by the pills. A reality in which Richas and Mike were simply sleeping. In which nothing was wrong and everything was happy and okay.

Fit could no longer face this with words. Not with violence or trickery either. So, as the sun set over the island, Fit found himself standing in front of Chume Labs' entrance. The silence was deafening. Uncomfortable. Even the water seemed not to utter a splash.

Over the past few hours, Fit had spent his time making sure the pills didn't cause Pac to do anything too crazy. No explosives. No injuries. No getting others to take the treatment. So far, nothing had gone awry. No blood spilled. No unwilling islanders given any dangerous drugs.

But, Fit would eventually lose sight of Pac. He had approached the man one last time, one last chance of persuasion. All Fit had been met with was that smile again. Those claims that everything was fine.

And once again, Pac had left with a certain kind of anxiety gracing his features. A desperation to leave Fit's sight. A desperation for the pills.

It all led him here, to the shush at the edge of the ocean. Tumultuous waves reflecting the ugly emotions that festered within this mess.

A breath.

Fit stepped into the boat, and pressed the button. The mechanical whirring of the machine rang loud in his ears as it slowly brought him closer and closer to the towering arch of Chume Labs. Dark and ominous now under the thundering clouds above. A foretelling of future rain.

The boat stopped with a jerk, leaving him to step onto the dock and walk under the awning. Before him was the elevator.

He pressed the button to call it up, bracing himself for what he might see below. Bracing himself for the words he might exchange with Pac and the state he might be in. The clicking of gears. Fit stepped on, and let it descend.

When it stopped, he observed for a moment, from the safety of the elevator's inside. Darkness had fallen over Chume Lab's. A quiet festering in the shadows. The power must've been shut off, effectively disconnecting the lights and vents of the facility.

Fit carefully stepped inside. His movements were careful, cautious of the area, almost preparing for Pac to jump out and ambush him. But nothing came. Just the quiet. He took a grounding breath, and continued his way further.

In truth, Fit hadn't really been in Chume Labs much before. He didn't know where to look first. Maybe a bedroom? A lab area of some kind? He sighed, following the walls of the building.

First, he found himself downstairs. Two doors sat before him, two bedrooms. Both empty. Fit turned away, and returned to the first floor. Still dark, ominous as he traversed the blind hallways. He peered into each room he came across. All empty of Pac. His skin tingled in a feeling of dread, like something was going to ooze from the shadows and scare him. Still Fit continued.

Until he heard it. The clinking of glass, and the softness of a voice,

unintelligible. Fit approached a door at the end of one of the hallways. It was mundane, unassuming. He hesitated above the door handle, before finally pushing it down and letting it creak open a few inches. It was dim, but not as dark as some of the other rooms. For a light was sitting on one of the long counters pushed against the wall. A lantern.

And beside it was a hunched figure, sitting upon a stool, muttering to themselves.

Fit gripped the door frame with white knuckled hands, and spoke. "Pac?"

It came out low. Too low for the man to hear.

"Pac?" He repeated, a little louder now. Finally the figure seemed to freeze, and, as if in slow motion, turned around.

The light did nothing to reveal Pac's face. Though, Fit could see some of his expression. A smile, weak, not as strong as before.

"F-Fitche?"

Fit rolled his bottom lip between his teeth, and then took a step. And then another. Until he was a mere few feet from Pac's trembling form.

"What are you doing?" He asked softly.

Pac blinked.

"I could- could ask the same for you," He replied, turning back around to the counter. In front of him were a few glass jars, a bottle of the happy pills, a brewing stand, and a myriad of different potion ingredients. Things like golden carrots or spider eyes.

"I wanted to check on you," Fit eventually said. His voice was raspy, weak. He felt almost as if he were approaching a wounded animal. Like Pac

would flee, or snap his figurative jaws.

So Fit was slow in the wake of Pac's quiet. Creeping closer, closer, till they were arm to arm, the counter just barely touching Fit's rib cage.

Fit stood there, still, peering at Pac's shadowed face. His smile was twitching around at the edges. Like it hurt from the previous curve of its uncanny stretch.

And on the counter his hands fiddled with the golden carrot, placing it on the brewing stand with a few happy pills. After a few seconds, it began to bubble. And then the concoction would seep into an ugly brown.

The clock on the wall ticked by as Fit could only watch him, wary of his every movement. Pac reached for the bottle. No doubt it was scorching against his skin, but Pac didn't even flinch. Instead, he brought it to his lips.

The moment a great gulp of liquid drew past his mouth, the man tore it from his face. So quick that Fit flinched away. But there was no aggression behind this action. Disgust maybe, but not that erraticness that Fit had seen earlier that day. Yet, even with his contempt, he swallowed it down, presumably hissing at its taste.

Fit instinctually brought a hand to the man's back, almost surprised when Pac didn't shrug him off. The man shivered under Fit's touch. And in the next moment he hunched over the counter, head pressed against the cold material of the surface. What escaped him was agonizing. A groan, like the dead. It rattled the room in echoes. Fit stopped his hand just below Pac's neck, frozen.

He was out of his element.

Fit could offer positive words, sure, but a healer he was not. He had no knowledge of the pills, of their effects, of their outcome. So all he could do

was let his soft words tumble from his mouth. The ones he had used whenever Ramon woke from nightmares during those early days of their vacation. Or, when he was sick.

Pac looked sick.

At least from where Fit was sitting. Pale skin, shaking body. A fever or the flu. “Pac,” It felt awkward in his mouth, “Everything’s going to be okay, alright?” A pause. “We’re gonna get through this... together.”

The ticking clock. Pac’s heavy breathing.

He finally looked up.

His face was gray in the light, and his eyes appeared sunken. He didn’t say anything. No, he just stared. Stared with those watery eyes.

And then he doubled over again, almost falling out of his own chair. A groan escaped him again. It sounded painful, uncomfortable. Fit held him up, making sure he didn’t slump over onto the floor. And as Pac’s face laid in the crook of his arm, Fit could feel the wetness of sweat, the cold of the man’s skin.

“It... didn’t work,” Pac said, his quiet, slurred words barely comprehensible to Fit’s ears. Before he could respond, the man pushed him away, stumbling on shaky legs. He brought his white sweater arm to wipe away the sweat on his forehead, his other hand steading him against the counter.

His breathing came out in rattled bouts.

Fit only stood and stared.

“What didn’t work?” He eventually asked. Pac shook his head, swallowing down spit, letting out another groan. He clutched his stomach.

There was quiet.

And then he gagged.

Fit's eyes darted across the room, until they landed on what he needed. In the corner of the room was a trash can, one which he ran too, picking it up and bringing it under Pac's hunched form. His breath left him quickly. The seconds passed like hours. Heaving, heaving.

And finally, Pac folded in on himself, doubled over, and retched into the can. Fit had just the semblance of quick thought to hold the man's long hair away from his face. Seconds. Minutes.

The clock was ticking nonetheless, and Pac had gone still, spitting the last of his stomach into the trash.

Fit would eventually bring it away. Pac slumped back into his chair, in the way people often deflated after throwing up, exhaustion stringing their limbs and muscles. Pac seemed on the verge of sleep. But whatever was plaguing him almost seemed to prevent him from that slumber.

Pac shot his hand out for one of the glass bottles, but his awareness seemed dampened, causing him to miss, and instead, force it to topple, shattering against the hard surface of the counter.

"Shit!"

The first comprehensive words out of Pac's mouth as he scrambled to his feet. Fit took the man's hand in his own, immediately checking for any cuts the glass might have caused, but there was nothing. Just Pac's distressed face and teary eyes.

He cursed again, wrenching his hand free from Fit's grip, and staring at the speckles of glass across the counter.

“This is my third try,” he hissed, a mix of anger and frustration. “I just- I can’t get it right!”

His fist slammed against the counter, barely avoiding glass in his hand. Fit reached for his shoulder, but Pac immediately smacked him away.

So Fit didn’t push it. He could only brush the glass into the trash can, and back away, giving the other man space.

Pac sat down. Silence overtook them as he began to work again, with Fit leaning against the wall a few feet away, observing, making sure the man wouldn’t accidentally hurt himself. And he would soon realize, mind now unclouded, that Pac had not once regaled the perfection of the day, nor had he taken the pills which forced that unsettling smile on his face.

Hours had passed, Fit was sure of it. His determination fueled his inability to exhaust, staying up to watch Pac work. Years and years of going days without sleep in 2b2t aiding him in his mission.

And all of it was a rollercoaster that brought them up and down. Concoction after concoction. Drink after drink.

Pac often vomited, with or without the potions. Like his stomach was rejecting his own body. And he would shiver, quaking, as if he were freezing, even when Chume Lab’s was heavy with warmth and humidity. Fit would notice the sweat too, catching on the lamp light, glittering against his skin.

The anger too would appear, coming out in bursts, clenched fists. An insatiable agony next. Then confusion. Like he had forgotten for a moment why Fit was there, asking the same questions and looking at him with bleary, unfocused eyes.

His friend was falling apart.

Worse and worse and worse.

Until things came to a head.

Fit would often go back and forth between the kitchen for water, at least to soothe Pac's throat, ravaged by his own regurgitated stomach acid. When he had left, Fit *had* noticed the other man's twitchness. Not his usual quivering form, just quick, snappy movements. His lip was bitten and red from his own teeth. As if in pain, but resisting any sort of sign of agonization.

So Fit kept alert, again filling a glass of water from the kitchen sink. It wasn't as cold as he had wished, but it would have to do for Pac's comfort. And then, carefully, Fit held the glass before him, making sure not to spill. He crossed the threshold carefully.

The water swayed inside the cup.

Through winding hallways, the quiet permeated. Uneasiness would fall. The same he had initially felt walking into the building. A quiet, heavy sort of emotion. Wrongness. It was not long before he finally saw it, splattered against the floor in heavy droplets. Blood. Thick, a metallic taste in the air.

The glass fell from Fit's hand, and shattered on the floor. But, he didn't even give himself time to worry, bolting down the hallway.

The lab was empty. Empty and quiet, with blood pooling into every groove of the floor. "Pac!" Fit called out, abandoning the lab, and continuing his journey down each hallway, following the trail left behind by Pac himself.

It had dripped through the lobby. And then, down the stairs. The stairs to Pac and Mike's rooms. Fit steeled himself, and could only see where it led.

"Pac?" He repeated, quieter now, finding himself at the bottom of the staircase. It dripped and pooled and... led him to Mike's door. A light was

just barely shining through it, slightly ajar. He approached, cautious, breath still in his chest.

A few more steps.

Fit put his hand on the door's surface, and pushed.

And Pac sat before him.

His knees were touching the floor, kneeling over three holes in the very foundation of the building itself. Dirt was bunched between his fingers, muddening with the blood dripping off his fingertips.

He was digging graves.

Dirt under fingernails, covering his face and hands. The floors were covered in that dirt and blood alike, books strewn across the floor, written with ink, but soaked in red. Fit quickly found himself next to Pac, falling to his level, searching for the injury. "Pac?" He hissed, "Pac! Where is the blood coming from?"

Pac's eyes snapped up. He almost looked startled, and not as cloudy eyed as before. Suddenly he smiled. Weak, tired. Genuine.

"I did it Fit," He said, then raising his voice. "I did it! I made the cure!"

Pac grabbed Fit by the shoulders, soaking blood into the fabric of his shirt. Despite the uncomfort, Fit didn't move away.

"What- what do you mean?"

"The cure, Fit! I-"

Pac was cut off when Fit gently grabbed the man's arm. A hiss escaped clenched jaws, cursing with sudden pain.

Fit had found the source of the blood. Long wounds drawing from his upper arm and falling just past his wrist. But, these were not made with knives. No, these looked like the indents of fingernails.

“Pac, I need to patch this up,” He whispered, standing, looking around the room for any sort of supplies, before searching his inventory. “What- what happened?” Pac looked down at his legs. He couldn’t seem to meet Fit’s eyes.

“I was so close to- to making the cure, but, the cravings- they- they just got stronger and stronger,” He eventually replied. “It was a... a mistake,” A pause. “I didn’t mean to hurt myself, but- I needed to stop thinking about those... those pills!”

Fit didn’t stop to reply, keeping his focus on unraveling a roll of gauze he had found in his backpack. Luckily he had found a regen potion in his bag too.

Slowly, he applied the potion, washing away the dirt and hopefully slowing the blood. He dabbed it lightly with his shirt, before finally winding the gauze tightly around his wounds. Pac blew air through his teeth. Fit was sure it had to be painful, but he was just thankful it was covered. He didn’t think he could bear seeing Pac collapse from the blood loss, least of all die because of it.

Eventually he returned the gauze to his bag.

And silence fell upon them for a few moments, broken as Pac opened his mouth to speak again.

“I’m sorry,” Pac said weakly. “For putting you through all that... shit. It was- I was completely taken over by the pills.”

Fit raised his brow, before gently taking Pac’s hands.

“You don’t have to say sorry,” He replied. “It’s- it’s not your fault-”

“I took the pills on my own accord!” Pac hissed.

Suddenly, Fit almost appeared angry.

“You took them to find a cure!” A huff left his lips. “You just saved the island from a potential outbreak of this shit. You’re... you’re strong, Pac. Stronger than anyone I know. Smarter than anyone I know. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.”

Pac looked away, flushed. His hands were shaking in Fit’s.

“Thank you, Fit,” He eventually whispered, breaking the short quiet. And then a pause. “But, I wish I was as strong as you say. Even with some of the cure, I still want the pills. I don’t It’s so hard to think about... about Mike and...”

Pac sniffled, taking his hands away from Fit’s, standing. He was trembling again, as he had before.

“I’m sorry,” He said again.

And from his pocket, two of those white, oblong pills were removed. Pac popped them into his mouth and swallowed them before Fit could react.

The clock on the wall ticked.

Fit turned away.

“I’m sorry too,” He said. “But, I’ll do everything I can, okay? We’ll get the cure to you again, and... and you’ll be good as new.”
A pause.

Pac didn’t reply.

And, when Fit drew his eyes back to the man he called his friend, Pac was smiling.

A smile that stretched to the very edges of his face. Something uncanny and disgusting.

Fit could not bear to return one back.

BARB (BARB_PNG)

FLIGHTSCREAM (GODSLEASTFAVOURITEWHITEBOY)

Not Without Trust

Tulip (twoheadedtulip)

Body heavy with exhaustion. Hands sweaty around a damaged communicator. His eyes were wide. His mouth was dry.

Pac found himself nauseous, stomach twisting with a dreadful cold.

'Saudades de você queridinho' was what he read on the illuminated screen. He could almost hear Cell's laugh. See his crazed expression. Feel the teeth in his leg. Shivers went up and down Pac's spine, swallowing the saliva plaguing his mouth. "No, no, no," he mumbled, heart stuck in his throat. "No- no I'm- gonna die- he's gonna-"

His words escape him in bouts, breath becoming quicker and quicker until there was barely any sort of inhalation of air at all.

Pac shuddered, chest crushed under imaginary circumstances, eyes becoming wet. "Pac?"

"I'm not safe- I can't-"

"Pac."

"He'll find me- I'm-"

"Pac!"

Pac swiveled around, startled. Though it was difficult to see in the darkness of the night, he could still make out Bad's figure standing before him. The man reached out and gently grabbed his shoulder.

"Pac, he doesn't know where you are. You're fine, relax, trust me."

Pac took a shaking breath.

Bad continued.

“You’re strong, Pac, you’re strong. He’s- he’s just trying to rattle your cage. And... I’ve got you... I’m here, we’re together. I can protect you.”

“He’ll find me eventually,” Pac proclaimed tearfully. He could feel his body titter in waves of fear. He was practically frozen with it. Prey trapped in the eyes of its predator.

“He won’t,” Bad insisted, hand clutching tighter at Pac’s shoulder. “Just- let’s-” He looked out into the ocean.”

“I think he has my location,” Pac mumbled. His eyes were downcast to his feet. Bad’s eyes returned, a sigh escaping his mouth.

“Then, let’s... let’s get off the island,” He eventually said. “If we keep moving, he’ll never be able to find you, how’s that?”

Though his fear seemed almost to consume him, Pac would nod, albeit weakly. He would do anything to escape Cell’s clutching hands.

Those teeth, too.

The center island forest they walked through brought a fraction of peace to Pac’s tumultuous emotions. The earthy smell and springy, soft ground.

His heart had since calmed in the quiet of their environment. But, he couldn’t seem to shake that feeling of the chase. Like any moment figures donning gas masks could jump from the bushes and catch them off guard.

So Pac’s eyes darted amongst the green, watching for movement, hand clasped firmly on the hilt of his sword swung around his hip. If an attack

were to befall them... he would be ready. Step after step after step.

Bad walked before him, clearly not as cautious nor fearful. His gait was casual. Though, his eyes were clearly searching. Perhaps for a cave open, one that would hide Pac well enough for a while before moving on again.

Step after step after step.

The air around them smelled fresh, like greenery after it rained. If Pac looked close he might see the dew hanging from each blade of grass or leaf.

Step after step after step.

The silence was getting to him now. It was too quiet. Too unassuming to not be a trap. It itched under his skin like ants crawling about his bones. A mild nausea that lurched in the impatience of not knowing the next second, the next minute.

He stopped in his tracks.

A breath of the fresh air to settle the burn in his chest. But it never went away, not when the hair on the back of his neck stood on end and his hands shook with a sudden feeling of uneasiness.
The woods shuffled.

And whooped.

And screamed.

And laughed.

Distantly, at least. But not far enough.

Pac lunged forward, grabbing Bad’s arm, forcing him to stop.

“Bad,” He whispered urgently. “They are- They are close!” his breath left him quickly. “How did they find me!?”

Bad’s eyes searched the green of the trees, before turning to face Pac fully. “It’s okay,” He replied. “They don’t have enough information to find you, let’s just- let’s keep going.”

Pac swallowed and returned his shaking hands to his sides. He forced himself to continue, to lift his legs and walk forward.

Step after step after step.

It was torture.

He could hear their jeers, their excitement. Yards and yards away. A hunting group. Cellbit, no doubt its leader.

Pac took an unsteady breath. One foot after the other.

Walking and walking, trees passing them by. He wished it was calm. Wished Cellbit wasn’t his source of fear. Wished everything around him would just disappear. Another breath.

The clamoring was getting closer still.

And, riddled with an itchy sort of nausea, Pac picked up the pace of his walk. Faster and faster. The yells would only become louder and louder. He could even pick out Cellbit’s voice in the chaos, the beat of horse hooves.

Pac ran in that next moment, his instincts clutching his throat and forcing him forward. His breath came out in short increments. His legs ached and tired. But still he ran, even when the pain reached his chest and lungs.

He ran and ran, until he hit something, and fell backward onto the grass. His mind raced a mile a minute. And before him—thinking previously

perhaps a bush or tree–was a figure. Tall, shadowed, and staring down at him. His clothes were bloodied, dirty, ripped at the ankles of his pants.

Pac's breath stopped.

"Fit?" He whispered, eyes widening.

Fit mirrored the expression, before twisting his face into a sneer, and unsheathing the sword from his belt.

"What are you doing here?" He replied darkly. His knuckles were white around the hilt of his weapon. Pac's heart tugged at the blatant show of mistrust.

"I-"

A crash beyond the brush stopped Pac's sentence short as Bad broke through the tree line. His sword was already unsheathed, held before him. A smile slid across his wild face when he saw Fit. Sly, almost sinister. "Fit! What a surprise!"

"Ah, I get it, so, you're here to kill me again?" Fit drawled, raising an eyebrow. Before Bad could answer, Pac quickly jumped in.

"No, no, no, we were- we were just passing through," It sounded awkward leaving his mouth, forced through exerted breath and panicked tone, unconvincing. Bad raised his sword an inch, doing nothing to help Pac's words.

The beat of horse hooves. Cellbit's teeth flashing in a smile. They were getting closer.

"Well, you kind of showed up perfectly for us," Bad said. "We really need that second kill."

Pac ran cold. They didn't have time to fight.

And... Fit's bloodied face, his hollow eyes, his unmoving form, twisted and wrong on the sand. It would be too hard to bear again.

Pac swallowed and guilt rose through his throat.

Fit raised his sword to meet Bad's.

The yelling, closer and closer.

Pac scrambled to his feet.

"We-we need to go!" He begged, standing between them. For a moment he became convinced that Fit would release the tension of his arm, and let the sword fall over Pac's head, blood splattering and body falling. But he didn't. His sword remained still, gaze bitter. "The Red Team," He took a breath. "They are still close!"

"Shit," Fit hissed under his breath, taking a few steps away from them. There was a pause, a breath, a consideration.

Eventually, Bad clicked his tongue, and reluctantly lowered his blade. Fit didn't mirror Bad's movements.

Bad's eyes lingered on the man for a moment, before flitting over the tree line, scanning for something.

"Is there a cave nearby?" He asked Fit, as if their blades hadn't been close to connection a mere few seconds ago.

"Probably."

"Where?"

"Why would I tell you that, jackass?"

“Language!”

Fit scoffed. His grip tightened around his sword again, less in preparation of trying to kill them, and more in a surge of anger.

“Tell us, or I’ll kill you,” Bad suddenly threatened, raising his sword again. Pac grabbed his arm.

“You have eyes don’t you? Just go look for it yourself!”

Bad responds, but Pac doesn’t hear it. He hears something else. That thumping against the ground. Those horses.

His ear twitched.

The arguing around him was growing louder, the swords growing closer.

And Pac ran again.

His legs moved without his brain telling them too, shooting him off into the green, bringing him over roots and sticks and grass.

A yell called for him, but it fell on deaf ears.

Pac could only think to flee as his body tore through the branches and leaves.

His momentum stopped as it had before, however. Halting drastically when a hand grabbed him from behind. Instinctively, as Pac swung around, he raised his hand in defiance, prepared to punch, smack, or claw the offending person. But he only went still. For the eyes he met were brown and not that pale blue.

Fit put a finger to his closed lips, signaling quiet, before pulling them both down, hiding behind a larger tree.

Shoulder to shoulder. A breath away. Complete silence.

And then there were the horses. He could hear them bound against the dirt, loud, an encroachment. As Red Team passed their little hiding spot, Pac found himself screwing his eyes shut. The ground vibrated around them from the sheer speed and weight of that collective group. Pac took a few breaths to calm himself, and it wasn't until the team passed did he glance over to Fit. Who... was closer than he had thought. When he was sure the horses—Red Team—were gone, Pac scrambled backward, face red. Fit only stood up.

And, eventually, Pac followed. His head was swirling with thoughts, questions. Did Fit... save him?

"Why did you help me?" He finally asked.

Fit glanced back for a second, before returning his gaze beyond their hiding place, silent, not...answering. Much to Pac's annoyance.

Though he soon realized where Fit's attention was, as Bad seemed to run up from out of nowhere, grabbing Pac's shoulder. He forced something in his hand. A diamond sword. Bad's diamond sword. And then his tools. His... armor.

"What-"

"Look, they're gonna come back soon," Bad told him, an iron sword now sheathed at his side instead of the one now in Pac's hands. "So I'll distract them and you'll hide."

"Hide? Bad-"

"If you die, they'll win, if I die, it's just a few points off, okay?" Bad said. "Just... trust me."

“Yeah-” Pac eventually nodded, choking on his word, still brushing off his debilitating fear. “Yeah of course.”

Bad withdrew his hand, before running off into the woods he had emerged from. Silence left his place. Though, Pac could hear the distant hooves still, and could only hope Bad would keep safe.

“Come on,” Fit said suddenly, cutting through Pac’s thoughts, startling him. He whipped around, meeting Fit’s eyes with widened ones. “We need to go.”

Pac didn’t have much time to react as he was pulled away from their hiding spot. He didn’t resist, though he could only wonder what Fit was doing.

“Where are we going?” He asked, voice still shaky from the almost-encounter with Red Team.

“You wanted to go to the cave, right?” Fit said, not turning around to face him. “I’m taking you there.”

Pac took a breath, letting the other man drag him wherever they were going. He wondered if Fit was going to kill him. He deserved it, after what happened that morning. An ambush which he had failed to stop. Fit had every right to be angry. And... maybe revenge upon him was a mercy. At least for Pac. What he wouldn’t give to be out of this forest, return to base. Ideally by Fit’s hand.

Though Cellbit would always find him it seemed, even if he returned. There was no escape.

His thoughts halted once they themselves stopped moving.

And before them was a cave, as Fit had promised.

A wide, dark, open maw. The perfect place to lure someone inside, and kill them. Somehow he felt more comfortable dying by Fit's hand. The thought of being Cellbit's victim... again... only proved to make Pac queasy.

So, in the end, Pac followed into the darkness, feeling the warmth of Fit's hand against his wrist. Their journey through the cave took mere minutes before Fit eventually crouched against one of the walls, prompting Pac to kneel as well.

"We'll hide here for a bit," Was all Fit said. And silence would soon follow. A stifling sort of quiet that almost made Pac feel suffocated, squeezing his lungs. At least the Cellbit induced panic had calmed somewhat in his chest. Even if it was replaced by an awkward guilt, festering and crawling up Pac's throat. He took a breath and glanced to his side.

Fit was sitting there, face partially turned away. It was hard to see his expression in the darkness. Perhaps of anger, scorn.

"Why did you help me?"

The question from before.

Fit finally turned his head.

"What?"

"You hid me, uh- earlier," Pac muttered nervously. "Why?"

Fit glanced down to his hand, fiddling his fingers in a display of... awkwardness? "So you wouldn't expose us," He finally replied, letting out a laugh, humorless. "I don't want Red Team on my ass either, Pac."

Pac opened his mouth, closed it, opened it again.

"Right."

And silence returned over them.

The droplets that dripped down from the ceiling. The steady breath of Fit beside him. The ringing in his ears. Straining his hearing to pick up any horse hooves beyond the cave's opening, making sure they were safe from Cellbit's hunt.

It was too heavy. Too tense. That guilt tickled his throat again, threatening to leave in a regurgitation of stomach acids and spit. Fit had died at the end of Bad's ax, and Pac had not been able to convince, nor stop them. And now Fit could barely look at him.

Those soft, warm eyes.

Pac took a breath.

"I'm-" A pause. Fit was looking at him now. "I'm sorry."

More silence.

More suffocation.

Fit wasn't answering, only catching Pac between his hard gaze. Pac almost shriveled beneath the intensity, but stayed strong, opening his mouth again.

"For... What happened... this morning."

Fit made a face.

"You mean when you ambushed me?"

Pac glanced down at his feet, the tone cutting deep, forcing him to look away from Fit's expression. Still he soldiered on.

“Yes,” He said. “I- '' He mirrored Fit’s hollow laugh from earlier. “I tried to stop them, I did. But- that’s not an excuse, I know,” A breath. “So- I’m sorry, I- I don’t know what else to say. Just, sorry. And, I hope you can forgive me.”

Fit sighed before he spoke, deflating.

“Look, Pac,” He muttered. “I understand.”

Pac looked up.

“Really?”

“Of course, I mean, we’re in Purgatory, we can’t expect everything to be sunshine and roses. I can’t expect you to not try and win. I understand.”

Pac rolled his bottom lip between his teeth. “Well, even if I want to win, I don’t want to kill you,” He whispered softly. “I don’t want you dead.”

Fit snorted, and for the first time since they unceremoniously bumped into each other, he smiled.

“I guess that’s a relief,” He said. “I don’t want to kill you either.”

“And that’s why you helped me?”

“I helped you cause-”

Fit suddenly stopped short. Pac narrowed his eyes in the darkness to see Fit’s face, but it was turned away. Perhaps in the light Pac would’ve seen the tinge of red that dusted over the man’s cheeks.

“I helped because we’re friends, roommates, y’know?” Fit eventually finished, laughing awkwardly, but genuinely.

Pac scooched a few inches closer so their knees touched. And, leaning into the warmth even more, his head fell on the other man's shoulder.

Fit froze for a moment. But he didn't move away. No, instead, he melted into it. His arm wrapped around Pac's shoulder, the side of his head hitting Pac's gently.

And there was quiet again, but comfortable this time. Not tense. Not heavy. Just comfortable. Pac found the nausea lightened, the suffocation dissipated. He felt free to breathe again.

But comfort seldom lingered.

Not when his comm pinged in a high-pitched notification sound, and Bad's death message lit the darkness around them.

Pac's eyes watered. Not with sadness, just fear. Crippling panic.

He didn't realize he was hyperventilating until Fit's hand rubbed circles into his back, speaking lowly.

"Pac, it's- it's okay. Even if he finds us, I'll fight like hell, he won't be able to touch you." Pac nodded, even if it was hard to believe, catching Fit's hand in his own and squeezing. For a moment it grounded him. Kept him there in that cave with Fit, and not in his own thoughts of Cellbit finding him, killing him.

In the distance, it was muffled, by the cave walls perhaps.

Hooves.

It got louder and louder, and then distant, and then close again. As if they were searching.

Fit unsheathed his sword, holding it tight in preparation for any fight that

might approach them. Pac only turned away. His eyes focused entirely on the cave wall, trying his best to force the noise of the horses away, the noise of Cellbit's voice and laughter.

But, it wasn't just in his head anymore, it was at the mouth of the cave, incomprehensible, but familiar. Cold ran down the ridges of Pac's spine. A chill that left goosebumps in its wake. Terror. Frozen terror.

Fit raised the sword, standing from his crouch and forcing Pac to follow. With their backs against the stone, they strained their ears. The footsteps. The whispers. It all echoed against the walls around them.

"QUEDINHO?" A sing-songy voice suddenly yelled, ringing in Pac's ears, making him scramble, only staying still as Fit used his other hand to herd him against the wall. The voice was dripping with mirth, a sort of excitement. Cellbit was taunting him.

Still, they stayed frozen.

Until the footsteps came closer.

And there was nowhere else to run.

A figure stood in the darkness before them, eyes glinting, far taller than Cellbit. And before they could turn their head fully to see the two pushed against the shadows, Fit lunged. He pushed the figure, now identifiable as Foolish, to the ground.

Foolish couldn't even stand before Fit grabbed Pac's hand, and forced him to run. "Hey man, what the fuck!" Foolish called after them. His footsteps could soon be heard behind them, but Pac wouldn't dare turn around to see. Not as they were so close to the light of the outside.

The sun.

The arch of stone.

The horses grazing beyond.

And the figure that ambushed the moment they found themselves under the warmth of the day. Cellbit, hidden behind walls of the opening, jumped, landing and toppling Pac and him both to the dirt.

A knife grazed his face. Pac, chest tingling with panic and sudden adrenaline, used his prosthetic to kick upward, kneeing the man in the stomach, giving him enough leverage to scramble backward and out of Cellbit's grip. The man stared at him with those piercing eyes. They almost seemed to scream with bloodlust and want. A need to kill Pac.

In the few seconds he had before Cellbit would pounce again, Pac's hand snapped to the sword at his belt, revealing its blade to the world. It clashed with Cellbit's own weapon for only a few seconds. All before Fit grabbed the back of Cellbit's shirt and forced him away, giving Pac enough time to get back on his feet.

Time whipped around all of them in quick succession. As Foolish breached the mouth of the cave, as Cellbit swung around to retaliate against Fit. It was a rush. And Pac had to think quickly as he swung his sword, blocking Foolish from attacking Fit from behind.

Their blades met. A clang of metal in the quiet air. Pac was pushed backward, so much so that he found himself back to back with Fit, both fighting their own battles. Their places almost switched, however, when Cellbit lodged his sword in Fit's arm—his metal one—and ducked under the man's next attack, successfully putting himself directly behind Pac, grabbing the back of his tank top.

Pac's chest jumped in panic.

The words around Cellbit's quiet lips.

“Queridinho,” He taunted. Barely a whisper.

And that ridged knife lodged in Pac’s lower back.

He found the air punched out of his lungs, fire scorching through his nerves, up and down his vertebrae. There was no sound that left his lips, but a whimper.

Foolish raised his sword over his head. Soon, it would come down on Pac and slice his head in two.

It fell.

Another sword stopped its path just above him. The sound of the swords colliding vibrated in Pac’s head, rang in his ears. It practically startled him out of his discombobulation, making him pull forward away from the knife.

A hiss escaped his teeth as the blade left him. Pain dragged through his skin, the feeling of it scraping his muscles.

The knife. The swords above. Cellbit’s hand forcing bruises as he clasps it around Pac’s forearm. A few feet from the noise, Pac turns around, and meets Cellbit head on. He ignored Foolish and Fit, the ring in his ears, the terror that crawled upon his throat. His focus was on Cellbit. Solely on Cellbit.

Pac raised his sword.

Pac found himself in battle.

The clang of blades, the vibrations of their collision running up his arms. A jab, a swing, a stab.

The sun beat down and made him sweat, flying around them as they

lunged at each other in a display of primal rage between them.
Seconds. Minutes.

Cellbit raised his knife.

Pac stumbled.

That sharp fire lodged in muscle once again. Pain and ache and sting festering in his arm. Pac yelled out this time, staring at the knife sticking out of his skin.

And in the same moment, Foolish himself finds a blade through his throat, collapsing quickly, forcing Cellbit to take a glance, giving Pac his moment.

He stabbed the sword upward.

It slid through the skin easily, up through the chest, the heart. Cellbit made a noise like a dying animal, slipping to the grass.

Blood ran like rivers into the dirt.

Pac stumbled away, almost falling, before Fit caught him, letting him down slowly to the ground. Pac reached up. His vision was blurry and his body was numb with ache. And the quiet returned.

Everything over as soon as it started.

Pac swallowed thickly, reaching his hand to glide his fingers over Fit's face. "I'll patch you up, it's all gonna be alright," Fit whispered.

A genuine smile graced Pac's lips.

"Yeah, okay," He replied, almost doubtful. It hurt to speak, to breathe. He could feel the blood wetting his shirt. Pac couldn't believe he was salvageable in that moment. There was no saving him.

Fit leaned over him, picked up his hand, and kissed the inside of his wrist. Pac suddenly felt flustered. His cheeks red no doubt, much to his embarrassment.

“Trust me,” Was all Fit said then.

A pause. The blood was getting worse.

“I will,” Pac whispered back. And this time, he believed him. Perhaps the tone, the kiss, Fit’s warm eyes.

Pac believed him.

SHINXY (XXSHINXY)

LETÍCIA (LETICIAVASC_ART)

Lullaby

Strawberry (ilovehideduo)

The sunrise gradually dispelled the evening dusk, gradually making its presence clear on the island's horizon.

Slowly bringing light to the pungent darkness of dawn, the timid rays of the sun peeked through the flowing white curtains of the room and the gentle wind that escaped through the half-open window.

Pac blinks, unwilling to open his eyes again, which are so heavy that he can barely keep them open. Even so, sleep is nowhere to be found, and all that remains is the tiredness that fills every inch of his exhausted body on the crumpled sheets of his messy bed.

How many days has it been since he last managed to sleep? About two? Or more? He had no idea. But it was time to get up.

Pac knew he wasn't the best when it came to dealing with his own feelings - just as he knew, or at least believed, that he wasn't good at anything - and it would be even worse when he was alone. Especially considering that the cure from the happy pills was still very fresh in his body, and he still had after-effects from the time he spent forcing those pills down his throat.

At this point, it's very likely that paranoia due to the lack of a good night's sleep has rotted his brain.

He reaches for his prosthesis, which is resting on the wall next to his bedside.

The scar on his leg pulses with a phantom pain, just like every morning. Just because many years have passed doesn't mean that the pain has gone

- it's still there, even if there's nothing to grieve or feel anymore.

On any regular day, he would turn to his best friend for help. Today, with him gone, Pac is forced to deal with the fact that he has to face his scars alone. The long years that have passed since what happened don't mean that the situation has become any less painful either.

After putting his prosthesis in place and making sure it's fixed, Pac allows himself to look at his colored stickers for a moment, stuck to the grey metal, mourning the memories of the people he cared so much about, now gone.

The sun gradually enters his room through the openings in the window, no longer covered by the curtain, and now warming his skin with light golden rays.

Today is going to be a sunny day.

Hours later, Pac could no longer keep his eyes open because they felt too heavy. He knew how tired he was after a long day on the island, all day teleporting to various places and building non-stop, trying to occupy his mind with anything so that there was no space for worry.

He yawned once more, just longing for anything comfortable enough for him to be able to lie back and nap for a while.

He had just helped rescue the island's newest resident, Bagi, and everyone was excited about her arrival, which resulted in a big mess, just like all the events that happened on the island.

Even Pac himself was happy about the arrival, the main reason being that it was a person of the same nationality as his own, but also because he had received new information about his friend Walter Bob from the Brazilian. He was grateful that he was okay, and that he cared enough about him to

send a message.

There was a lot of noise that he couldn't properly comprehend, as all the voices seemed to be getting more and more distant in his ears. He was going to fall asleep soon, so he laid his head on the shoulder of whoever was next to him, hoping that whoever it was wouldn't mind.

The first time this incident happened, Fit automatically froze when he felt Pac's head on his shoulder.

He was distracted. Next to him on the sofa was Pac, who had been yawning and struggling to keep his eyes open for some time.

On the opposite side, Philza's voice sounded like a distant mumble, saying something about the island's new resident, to which Fit wasn't able to fully concentrate on what he was saying. Mainly because of the complete mess that was going on not far away, but also because he was already a bit busy paying attention to Pac, who only took a few moments before falling completely asleep, his head resting gently on his shoulder.

When Fit took the chance to glance at him, he felt his heart speed up when he saw the peaceful state his 'roommate' was in.

His eyes are closed, eyelashes resting on his pale skin and his breathing is regulated. He looks kind of adorable, in a good way, so much so that just seeing him so close makes Fit's heart skip a few beats, racing in his chest as if he'd been running for hours non-stop.

But at the same time, there's a worry in the back of his mind, which corrodes his stomach and brings that cold feeling. He couldn't help but notice how deeply asleep Pac is, even given the circumstances, like all the noise around, and that worries him a lot.

Over the last few days, he hadn't failed to notice the way the deep, gray circles were always under his eyes, the pale skin and all the other obvious

signs of exhaustion he was showing. But usually, when asked, Pac would just smile and say that he was fine, even though it was becoming increasingly obvious that he wasn't.

It had been so few days since Pac received the happy pills cure that Fit wondered if that was the reason behind his tiredness.

In any case, waking him up would be worse, so Fit remains quiet, talking to Philza a little more quietly, even though it makes no difference, since the chaos around them remains the same.

A few days had passed since then, and Fit had momentarily forgotten what had happened, imagining that it had been the first and only time it had happened, even if the dark circles under Pac's eyes remained the same. He wasn't sleeping around anymore, so Fit took it as a good sign - not a completely good sign, just that maybe the situation wasn't as bad as before. Just as a precaution, he still kept a close eye on Pac, just in case.

And now it's the cultural event of Mexican independence.

The event decor is now, of course, Mexican-themed. There's a huge structure in the center - a cathedral rising tall, huge white marble pilasters, plus the Mexican flag at the top. There were also small stands, all made of wood, with the widest variety of typical foods on display.

At the party, Pac lassoes Fit around the waist, and he laughs, the laughter bursting from his chest. And Pac can't stop himself from laughing in return, out of breath, as if the air had just evaporated from his lungs.

It doesn't take much to undo the lasso, but first Fit allows Pac to have a little fun, dragging him around the stalls, making Fit surprised by the strength he exuded in pulling him without showing much effort.

Later in the dance, it takes a lot of effort for Fit not to accidentally step on

Pac's feet while trying to follow the rhythm, the air filling with laughter and Mexican cultural music.

Eventually, after a few hours, the festivities quieten down, and each of the residents is heading back to their own homes to call it a day.

However, Fit and Pac chose to stay on for a little while longer, heading towards the back of the cathedral with their hands full of stacked pots, filled to the top with food from the stands.

At the back of the building, there were wooden benches set out in a small garden.

With only the moon, the stars and the vast darkness above them, the place was lighted only by the small lanterns hanging from the trees, which spread a warm, flickering light around.

Fit and Pac settled on a bench that was near the flowers, arranging the pots next to them.

Fit quickly opened one of the pots, exposing the tacos filled with the most diverse ingredients, "These look good," he said, taking one and handing another to Pac.

Pac accepted it, his dark eyes glistening in the yellowish light of the lanterns, "It's kind of Brazilian culture to take a tupperware home with a bit of food," he mentioned, then took a bite.

"Is it?" Fit asked, arching an eyebrow. "Looks like I'm becoming an official Brazilian now."

Pac laughs, and Fit's heart races in his chest. "You already are."

At first, their intention was just to spend a little time - after all, it was still early - trying some of the food they had packed, but the conversation

ended up going on longer than it should have.

As the night progressed and dawn gradually made its presence felt, the night breeze slowly became colder, making them both wince in their seats.

Fit couldn't help but be concerned by the way Pac's eyes were starting to close frequently, once again oscillating between wakefulness and sleep, just like the first time it had happened.

Not wanting to persist with the problem, he continued talking for a few moments, but in a lower tone of voice, almost like a whisper, so as not to disrupt the calm silence in which they were engaged, and especially so as not to disturb Pac.

Pac was busy fighting his own tiredness, still trying to pay attention to what Fit was saying, every now and then replying half a word, his sleepiness evident even in the way his words came out slurred. Eventually, he was unable to keep his eyes open, causing his head to slowly fall to the side, finding support on Fit's shoulder, who remained frozen for a moment. It happened again.

This time he didn't know what to do either, whether to wake him up or stay still. That was the moment Fit realized it was getting later by the way the darkness was deepening.

So Fit just adjusted himself in his seat, so that he could find a comfortable position, but his movement was enough to wake Pac, who moved away as soon as he did.

Then he sighed, rubbing his eyes with the back of his hand, "Sorry, Fit," he said, covering a yawn. "I guess it's getting kind of late for me."

Fit looked at him, " Yeah, you're right," he replied, trying to hide the concern in his tone. "If you want, I'll walk you to Chume Labs Island."

Pac smiled gratefully. "As you wish."

They stood up, collected their pots from the benches and started walking. By now, dawn was beginning to completely surround the island, the darkness punctuated only by the soft lights of the stars and the moon that hung high in the sky, signaling how late it was.

With the teleport, it doesn't take long to reach Chume Labs Island, where flowers stretch across the entire piece of land, surrounded by the ocean waters that churn around it, hitting the rocks. Fit has made sure to take Pac to the door of the warehouse, even though it's not really necessary.

"Take a rest," Fit says, his tone vibrating a little more firmly than it should.

And Pac smiles, nodding, "I will," he reassures, even though he knows it's a lie. He didn't want to worry Fit any more than he already did.

Fit then says goodbye with one last hesitant wave, hoping that Pac will be able to sleep in his bed at least tonight.

Days later and another morning begins like any other, the sun shining above the island. Fit stretched slowly, feeling his communicator vibrate a few moments after waking up, being greeted by Pac's good morning and Tubbo's exclamations, followed by some complaints about something he was working on. Fit quickly replied to the messages, then got up, shaking off the sleepiness, and began to prepare for the new day, not forgetting to check Ramon's room in the morning to see if anything had changed. Nothing had. The place was still untouched.

Fit sighed, keeping his disappointment and worry in his chest. Then he carefully closed the door and set off in the direction of the island square.

Later, he met up with Pac first to catch up, and then they both headed for

the Tubhaus to keep Tubbo company and continue the fofoca.

When they get there, Tubbo greets them with a big smile and lots of information to tell them.

Fit quickly leans on one of the walls of the building, and Pac is right next to him, leaning in the same way but with his arms crossed, looking a little shrunken, but Fit avoids looking too much. Tubbo seemed extremely focused as he was talking about his machinery, which Fit wasn't really paying attention to. More because he didn't understand than because he wasn't interested, though.

He was just nodding, pretending to understand something until Tubbo poked him and pointed to his side.

"Hey, king. I didn't want to say anything, but Pac's kind of asleep standing next to you," Tubbo said. Fit frowned, confused, before turning to find Pac half asleep, his head resting on his shoulder again, "Is that so boring? Jeez," Tubbo joked.

"Pac?" Fit called out, lowering his voice so as not to startle him.

Pac woke up in a jolt, blinking a few times to ward off sleepiness, "Ah- Sorry, Tubbo, I didn't mean to." he apologized, holding back the yawn that wanted to come out right away. "Really, I'm sorry."

"Man, why are you apologizing? Relax, you can go home and go to sleep if you want," Tubbo replied, looking worried too.

"I'm fine." Pac quickly denied, straightening up in his place. "So, what were you talking about...?"

Tubbo seemed to raise an eyebrow, now more concerned than offended, but decided not to insist. Slowly, he went back to his business again, and Pac seemed to be paying a little more attention this time.

And Fit had come up with an idea, he just needed enough courage to put it into action.

Today is roughly a week since Pac first fell asleep on Fit's shoulder for the first time. Since then, Fit has only seen him with the same tired expression on his face, the dark circles under his eyes only becoming more and more visible. When it happened for the first time, Fit imagined it would be something an one time situation, but when it happened for the third time in the same week, he decided he would do something about it.

He wanted to offer his company that, even if it wasn't one of the best, it could be exactly what Pac needed. He knew he had trouble thinking too much, especially on his own, so having someone on his side might help. That's what Fit thought.

So, after a long day on the island, visiting various places and talking to the residents, at the end of the day he asks Pac to accompany him to the lava cast, so that they can finally have a moment alone and Fit can approach the subject more directly.

It's already evening when they stand in front of the lava cast. The sun has completely set, with only the light of the moon and stars to accompany them. Pac accompanies him to the door of his house, and Fit takes the chance.

"Pac. Are you feeling alright?" Fit begins, concern evident in his tone.

Then Pac compresses his lips, hesitating before trying to smile a little. It seems a little forced, but he is able to lift the corner of his lips in a small smile. Of course, why wouldn't he? "Yes," he replies. "Just a bit tired, you know?"

Fit nods slowly, although he doesn't completely believe what Pac has said. Silence follows, letting only the sound of buzzing cicadas break the night

air between them, as Fit tries to find the words he wants to say. He keeps his cold hands in his pockets, nervous.

It takes a big sigh from him before he is able to gather enough courage in his core to ask more directly. "Pac. To be honest, you've been acting a bit strange these days. Are you sure you're all good?"

Pac's smile seemed to falter a little, but almost at once it was there again. "Totally," he assured him, with a little more firmness in his voice. "But thanks for your worry, Fit, it's nothing."

Fit frowned. He knew that Pac had a bad habit of insisting that the people around him didn't worry about him, always replying that he was fine or would get better when asked about his well-being. Usually, he just didn't insist, but if he stayed that way, Pac would never say it himself.

"You know, if you don't want to talk about it, that's fine, I just worry because you always look so tired every time I see you," Fit begins, "I mean, we're all broken up, but we have each other, and Tubbo, to support us. We don't have much, but I just don't want you to think you're alone."

Fit's answer seems to have convinced Pac at least a little. Pac sniffles, looking down. "I know. Yeah. You're right. I'm sorry."

"Why don't you get some sleep instead of apologizing? Here.", *with me*, Fit doesn’t finish.

"Here? Are you sure?"

"Yes." Fit replies, with a soft smile. "Well- if you want to, of course."

He hesitates for a few moments. "Yeah. That would be good."

Fit opens the door a little wider, leaving enough space for Pac to pass through.

"You know- you can come here whenever you want," Fit says, walking him through the rooms of his house.

Pac settles into a corner at the end of the bed, looking down at his hands resting in his lap. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Fit go around the bed to sit on the opposite side, the bedding sinking as he settled in.

Fit looked at Pac, "Do you need help with your prosthesis?" he asked, hoping it wasn't a sensitive topic.

Pac didn't often mention his prosthesis.

So he hesitated for a moment. Up to this point, very few people had helped him remove his prosthesis, hell, come to think of it, most people didn't even know his prosthesis even existed.

Up to this point, the only people who had helped him were his best friend - who had made and decorated the stickers with his own hands - and Cellbit, because the happy pills cure had left him physically and mentally tired, too vulnerable to refuse his help. Pac himself, from years of use, knew very well how to remove it properly and without needing help. But a part of him wanted to, even if he didn't want to bother Fit.

It took time for him to accept being seen as vulnerable - after all, the more vulnerable he is, the more of a nuisance he is to those around him - he needed trust. A lot of it.

But he trusted Fit. With his life. And maybe he could help Fit with his prosthesis too? So it wouldn't hurt to say yes just once.

Fit was about to assure him that it was all right if he didn't want it, when Pac nodded, "Yes, I think so." he replied in a whisper.

Fit got up and kneeled next to his leg, handling it carefully. His fingers touched Pac's prosthesis with a little hesitation, sliding over the surface,

finding the locks and connection points. Cautiously, he began to release the fittings, one by one, while Pac watched in silence. The caution was such that it made him feel a little special, even letting out a soft laugh as Fit visibly got confused by the advanced technology - and Pac was kind of proud to make sure that at least his prosthesis was unique - also noting the completely non-discreet way in which Fit's ears turned red after his laugh.

Pac couldn't judge, after all, his heart was racing every time Fit's fingers touched his skin. It was almost as if he could feel the touch even when it was no longer there. It kind of left him wanting more.

Since when was this room so warm?

"I don't think I've ever seen one this good in my life," Fit said, referring to the prosthesis. Pac could do nothing but nod silently, having been taken aback by his words. Maybe he should stop thinking too much.

When Fit has finished, he removes the liner and rests the prosthesis on the wall, next to the headboard, close enough for Pac to reach it whenever he wants. Then in the next instant his eyes are on Pac again, as if to make sure he's okay.

"Thanks," Pac says, trying to make his voice sound as casual as possible, and less like he was boiling just a few seconds ago. "Do you want help with yours too?"

Fit seemed to hesitate for a second, but then nodded. "It is only fair." he said, with a small smile on his lips. Soon, he settled down on the bed with a deep sigh, allowing his prosthesis to be visible to Pac.

And Pac can't stop himself from paying attention to every detail, his fingers carefully undoing the locks, slowly releasing the pins that kept it firmly attached to Fit's arm. It certainly looks a little less elaborate than his, more improvised and adapted over the years, but it also appears to be

quite functional. Some later adjustments seem too recent, probably coming from Ramon, after all, Pac already recognized the way the little one built and modified his machines.

Lower down on his forearm, there are subtle mustache stickers. A little faded, but still visible, and Pac can't help but smile a little. That was clearly Ramon too.

Just as he finishes unfastening the last closure, he leaves the prosthesis on top of the dresser, next to the lamp.

"All done." Pac smiles, a little awkwardly, "Good night, Fit."

"Good night, Pac."

Fit got up to lie on his back on the opposite side of the bed, feeling the mattress sink slightly under his weight.

Pac did the same, curling up in his own space on the bed.

With the silent night around them, Fit was feeling tense, his muscles stiff as he adjusted to the mattress, his body warm and nervous under the covers. The space between them was scarce, and Fit was trying to find a position that was comfortable, but that also didn't invade Pac's space.

Pac had already noticed the tension in the air, and it was making him nervous. It wouldn't be a problem for him to sleep next to Fit, what really worried him was whether Fit was comfortable enough to get close. Not that it was really necessary, but the space was so short that it might be a better alternative for them. He wanted to say what was going on and talk to Fit about it, but as much as he wanted to, the words didn't seem to come out and go anywhere other than his thoughts.

Then, breaking the silence, "Fit. Are you asleep?", Pac manages to ask.

The answer comes soon after, "No." Fit mumbles. "Something wrong?"

Pac takes a deep breath, feeling the air fill his lungs, then exhales slowly, trying to find the words. It takes a while to allow himself to be vulnerable, but he felt he was ready. "I feel like the weight of the whole world is on my shoulders," he begins, his voice low and shaky, "The people I love disappeared in the blink of an eye and I couldn't do anything about it. I can never do anything," he blurts out, trying not to let his tone come out too bitter.

The next words get stuck in his throat, and for a moment even breathing seems difficult.

For a few seconds, he can hear Fit shifting to sit on the bed, and Pac immediately knows that his eyes are turned in his direction, but he purposely avoids looking into Fit's eyes. That's just because he knows he would die if he saw the worry in Fit's eyes, he couldn't bear the guilt of making him so preoccupied, it would be too much for him to handle. So his gaze fixes only on the room's wooden ceiling.

Fit hesitates before opening his mouth. Sometimes, he even finds it unbelievable that Pac doesn't believe in himself when he's so intelligent. If he could, he would list every admirable thing about him, absolutely everything he has done that has saved this island.

His hand hovers in the air before reaching for Pac's shoulder, leaving a gentle squeeze in an attempt to bring a little comfort, "There are certain things that happen on this island that are inevitable. Unfortunately, not everything is always within our reach, so all we can do is hope that they're okay." Stopping for a second, he wet his lips, "And you... you're more than capable, and I understand that you can't see it now, but everyone knows and sees you that way, Tubbo and Ramon admire your intelligence. Hell- you saved an entire island with that cure. You're simply the smartest person I know."

Fit's words ran through Pac's mind. He wanted to, but didn't know if he'd be able to believe it now. Despite everything, the doubt remained there, in the same place it had been at first, weighing on his chest. His mind was torn between believing that he's not so useless when he thinks and leaning on Fit's words like a lifeboat, or believing that Fit is only saying nice things in an attempt to make him feel better about himself.

Either way, Pac swallows dryly, trying to process everything he's been told, "Thank you." he manages to say, the word coming out in a whisper.

"I'll be here for you. Always," Fit assured him, again giving his shoulder a gentle squeeze. Afterwards, Fit lay down again, but this time not on his back as he had done before. "Do you want to come closer?"

Pac hesitated before answering, feeling his heart racing. "Yes."

Fit extends his arm towards Pac, slowly, carefully, sliding his hand down his back, holding his blue Pacman sweatshirt, feeling the soft fabric through his calloused palm.

Pac feels warm, safe, so he rests his head on Fit's shoulder, his face nestling close to his neck.

Fit lets out a sigh he didn't even know he was holding, his muscles melting and relaxing in an instant. The weight of Pac's head snuggled against his shoulder, the warm breath next to his neck, the warm blankets wrapped around their bodies, the silent night outside with the low sound of cicadas, absolutely everything brought him comfort.

Then Pac took a shaky breath. He can feel Fit's chest rising and then falling, he can feel his heartbeat racing close to his ear, and Fit murmurs, "Boa noite.", even though he's said it before - he's just trying to make sure Pac does have a good night, who's to blame him - and the vibration of his soft voice serves as lullaby for Pac.

Pac tries to answer, whispering a 'boa noite' that comes out muffled and sleepy. Then he tucks himself in closer, his eyelids slowly drooping and surrendering to sleep.

The next morning, the sun gradually rises over the island's horizon, bringing its orange glow

Pac blinks under the weak rays of the sun coming through the windows, waking up slowly, trying to shake off the sleep that made him want to close his eyes again and go back to sleep. The first thing he feels when he wakes up is warmth, and then a sleepy, satisfied sigh escapes his lips. He had had a good rest, possibly even one of the best of his life.

Soon, he sits up in bed, stretching from the hours he spent with his muscles relaxed, and then he realizes. His heart pounds in his chest as the memories hit his newly awakened brain, and for a second it's as if he's about to combust. He had slept well because at last he was no longer alone. He had slept with Fit.

Then he looks over to find Fit sleeping peacefully in his bed.

He is lying on his back, his lips slightly opened as he breathes, looking extremely peaceful, with a peaceful expression on his face. His chest gently descended and ascended as his calm breath escaped like a sigh from between his lips. His scars became more visible as the golden light illuminated him, and Pac could do nothing but admire.

Then he realizes that a few seconds ago he must have been clinging to Fit's shirt. Pac was probably even hugging him. Just a few seconds ago he should have been hugging Fit, and Pac just hopes he didn't do anything embarrassing like snoring or drooling on his shoulder.

"Bom dia." Fit murmured when he woke up, his voice husky from sleep.

"Bom dia, Fit," Pac murmurs back and Fit feels a warmth in his chest every time he hears him say his name. "Sorry, did I wake you?"

"No." he replies, although he's covering a yawn the next second. "Are you getting up already?"

The question hangs in the air, and Pac presses his lips together, pondering. Considering the long days he's been awake, unable to fall asleep, he'd need more than a few hours of sleep to fully recover. And considering the way the sun hadn't even fully risen, it was still too early, so Pac agreed with himself that just a few extra minutes wouldn't hurt. Of course, he could just go home and sleep in his own room, but it was exactly Fit's presence that had made him able to fall asleep at least a little.

So Pac nods, "I think I can stay here a little longer." Then he snuggles up again, in the same place he was before, and Fit instantly embraces him, flooding his face with Pac's dark curls.

Little by little, the sun comes through the window, bathing the room in golden light. Pac's eyes are turned to the outside, his eyes catching sight of the orange sky that is gradually lightening, blinking slowly before surrendering to sleep again.

COOKIE (COOKIEDPIZZAS) & EMMY (LOUISAODERSO)

SAB (SABIMA_07)

Eating medicine stained roses (over saccharine coffee)

Dadu | Heaven (HeavenAnarchist)

A feeling of sorrow and despair is identifiable in the atmosphere of Chume Labs, and it's been like this for quite a few days. It's understandable, really. What once was a lively and cheerful home became nothing more than a cold, dark laboratory to one's own anguish. The only ones that stayed were the little hungry rats and... him.

Fit can't deny how bad it all feels. How different it all looks, even when it looks the same. Every step he takes leads him to a different question that always brought him to the same answer. He's doing it for Pac. He needs to do this for Pac.

The blood on the building's walls torments his thoughts and disperses all his questions, rushing his steps to the last floor of the lab. He follows the only trace he finds, the rats leading him to the darkest and most bloody of all places: Pac's room.

His heart drops, and for a few seconds, he wonders if he really wants to see what could be there.

Although, he doesn't hesitate when he steps in.

Standing ominously in the center of that badly-lit bedroom, Pac holds his trembling arms open as if he had been waiting for Fit, with a piece of paper in his hand.

— Fitch! — He called, that nice little accent he carries almost distracting Fit from the uncanny feeling that something was wrong. Almost.

He still held his arms open, they trembled as he forced himself to maintain a stiff figure, it seemed like he had been like that for a while.

Fit finally gathers the courage to look at Pac’s face, and the feeling he gets was exactly what he was expecting; yet, he cannot get rid of it. Fear.

Pac’s unsettling and uncanny smile was exactly what he expected to meet, yet, it still shook him to his core simply by seeing it once again.

— Hey, Pac... — He says, feeling his voice waver. — Are you doing better...?

— Of cooourse I am! — Pac answers in a cheerful tone and a happy smile. — Why wouldn't I be? Today's the best day ever! Plus, you're finally here, so everything's even better!

As Pac speaks, something looks wrong with him. He keeps, repeatedly, tilting his head to the side and giggling. Fit knows that Pac has nervous tics, it's been a thing that they've already had some conversations about, but it was never like this, never this intense - never this abnormal.

Pac still has his arms spread, and he seems to be waiting.

— How- Please, — Fit takes a step closer, and Pac's smile seems desperate for half a second, as if what he expected finally would happen. Fit takes his hand close to Pac's face, moving back a strand of hair that fell in front of his face — Please tell me what's going on. I really want to help you, Pac.

Pac seems disappointed. Scared, tired or even upset if you look by a certain angle. He still keeps his hands raised.

— I'm doing-, I'm perfect! — He says, and Fit can't help but mutter;

— I know. — It seems like he didn't even realize what he said, and he took a step back. Pac looks upset, even though he keeps that creepy smile on his face, and he finally lowers his hands. —... I understand that you are doing... fine. But please tell me at least what is up with Chume Labs. Why is there blood everywhere, Pac? Why is everything dark? Please let me help you. Please.

Pac almost laughs, moving past Fit swiftly, stepping out of his room. Then, he starts taking a stroll around Chume Labs completely out of a sudden, Fit following his every step.

— I don't see it! Chume Labs looks great, doesn't it? — He asks, looking back at Fit while still walking, pointing to his surroundings, and Fit cannot agree, not in the slightest.

— Pac... — He sighs, understanding how impossible it was to convince him not everything was alright. — Alright, I understand.
Pac stops, seeming satisfied, but the nervous tics come back, Fit notices how Pac is now biting his tongue, trying to control himself. He always did this.

— I'm glad you do, Fitch! — He affirms, taking a step closer to Fit. — Now we can finally spend some time together without you having to worry about anything, right?

Fit tries to control himself, to not overwhelm Pac with questions, because he understands it won't help. But he feels helpless, and being helpless feels unbearable. He has never felt this inexplicably alone, and that's because loneliness has never been something he was afraid of.
For the first time, he fears it. And he *despises* it.

— Yeah. You're right, Pac. — Pac smiles, and for half a second Fit knows he sees a genuine fondness in those dull, lifeless yellow eyes before they

return to this hollow shell of sadness that should be his cheerful friend. — What do you want to do? Can I accompany you for something?

Pac opens his mouth, but not a single sound comes out at first. Fit waits patiently before Pac manages to find his voice and speak. — We could just stay here, no? I'm waiting for Richas to wake up, after all! — Pac takes a step closer to Fit, grabbing both of his hands out of a sudden. Pac's fingers are abnormally cold, but it could probably be explained by the overall frigid atmosphere of Chume Labs. — You can wait with me!

— If that's what you want, I can stay with you, but... — Fit takes a deep breath, finally looking at Pac's eyes. It's uncomfortable, but it seems necessary. — I was hoping I could take you out somewhere. Chume Labs is a bit cold and... I miss spending time with you outside.

Pac's eyes shine with the suggestion, but it's not that genuine shine Fit saw so often. It’s almost like the truthful excitement he has been missing, the soul taken away because of the pills. However, simultaneously, he seems anxious. Hesitant. Scared, perhaps.

— I don't know, Fitch... Every time I go out, people keep telling me some crazy things! I'd just like to avoid it. Can't we stay here, please? — Pac asks, still holding Fit's hands without even realizing.

— It'll just be us two. I promise. — Fit assures, and although seeming hesitant, Pac smiles even wider.

— Okay. Okay, if you say so, I trust you, Fit! — Pac, however, pauses, muttering something to himself in Portuguese before he keeps going. — We just need to be quick. Richas may wake up any time soon and I don't want him to be alone or feel scared!

— I won't take much of your time, Pac.

Both of them walk out of Chume Labs.

Finally.

Leaving that cold, dark place may do some good to Pac's health.

Although Pac suggested they simply teleported to wherever Fit wanted to take him, Fit convinced him to walk today. It really was just an excuse to stay more with him, to make him get some sunlight (which seemed much needed as he was looking sickly pale) and to try his best to keep him outside of the damn Lab for as much time as possible.

Pac talked the entire way. Meaningless conversations, random thoughts, dispersed attention, all of it combined with irrational, unusual and disturbing behavior. Little things that only Fit could notice, such as an impatient way of walking, or how he tried to control nervous tics to seem more calm, how his cheeks seemed to hurt by how much he smiled and... Gosh, if Fit was gonna list it all, it'd take ages to do it. Every single detail about Pac just made it all more clear how unwell he was.

They finally arrive at their destination, and Pac stops himself in the middle of another random monologue about today being the best day of the island, staring at the place.

— Ahh! Starbobby! How did you guess I was craving for some coffee? — Ah, I just

Fit can’t answer before Pac went in running, opening the doors without even checking if there was anyone there. Fit ran right after him, not wanting to leave him alone.

When he walked in, Pac was leaning against the counter, almost falling while dangling his feet, keeping himself off the ground.

— Ceeeeellbiiiit!! — He calls, and visibly twitches the moment he says the name. — Roieeeer!!!! Tem alguém aquiii?

No answer is heard, and Pac looks back to Fit, who's been staring at him from the door. — There's no one here today. — Pac says, sounding a bit sad, although keeping his smile.

— Uh, then, we can come back later if you want, I- — Fit takes a step back, but Pac grabs his hand, desperately holding him, although trying to appear calm.

— No! No- Uh, if you think about it, I have permission to get stuff from here! I'm sure Cell Cellbit won't mind! — Pac stutters as he says that, but Fit truly doesn't have the opportunity to contest as Pac pushes him to 'their table'. The place they always sit every time they visit starbobby. It feels silly calling it "theirs", but... he doesn't really mind.

Fit turns to Pac and before he can even ask what he's gonna do, Pac is already back inside, jumping over the counter to grab stuff to make a coffee.

Fit sits down, knowing he can't really reason with Pac in this state. He feels anxious, his heart beating faster than he thought it even could just by thinking about how to find a way to bring Pac back. He wants to help him. He needs to help him. He needs Pac back.

That's his friend, after all.

It seems he has been too caught up in his worried thoughts because he immediately shivers when hearing Pac say something - which he can't even process -, seeing the Brazilian approach the table with a few things.

Pac holds a tray with two cups of what seem to be coffee and a plate with around eight "pão (pães?) de queijo", if he remembers the name correctly.

Pac puts down the two cups and the plate, placing the tray on another table and sitting down in front of Fit, still smiling.

— Ah, thanks, Pac. — Fit grabs one of the cups, taking a sip.

It's absolutely fucking disgusting.

Fit has drank Pac's coffee before and it’s most definitely not as awful as this one. This is... *too* sweet. There's *too much sugar*, and it’s just absolutely unbearable. The abnormal sweetness collapses with the natural bitterness of the coffee and it just leaves an awful type of sacharinne taste. It's too much. It's so sweet, so forcibly sweet - that it feels *wrong.*

Fit really fights the urge to not grimace at this horrendous taste, but thanks to years of having to pretend to be unaffected by pain, it wasn't that of an impossible challenge.

— What do you think, Fit? — Pac asks, grabbing one of the pães de queijo and taking a bite. Fit does the same, trying to alleviate the horrible taste of the coffee.

— Uhm, It's... g-great! — He's very clearly lying, but Pac paid no attention to it, just smiling at Fit's words.

Pac took a sip of his coffee, his expression remaining unchanged, that constant fake smile.

Fit puts down the cup, not intending on picking it back up. The taste still lingers in his mouth, and it’s just awful. Although, he keeps his composure, trying to focus back on what he truly needs to do.

— You know, it's... it’s really nice being here with you. — Pac seems a bit surprised by the sudden comment, looking away for half a second. — Do you remember when we were here with Richas?

Pac's eye twitches slightly as his son is mentioned, but he keeps smiling. — Of course I do! — He answers, fidgeting with his fingers.

— Yeah, it was a nice day... you gave me a rose, remember?

Pac goes red, smiling embarrassedly and laughing.

— Ah, yeaah! So silly of me, why would someone like you even keep a rose like that? — He looks away, now avoiding Fit's gaze at all costs. — Such a silly thing!

Fit doesn't smile.

Someone like him?

— I... I mean, I kept it. — Fit sounds rather upset saying that. Pac looks at him with an indecipherable expression. — I still- I still have it in my house, you know.

— You.. — Pac stops, seeming unable to respond for those few seconds.
Fit also doesn't talk. This isn’t something Pac would say normally. This also isn’t something he isn’t used to.

But why?

Why did the sting on his heart grow sharper just by the simple possibility of Pac seeing him as unreachable or uncaring or...

— I mean, roses are nice, obviously you should keep them! We are in the best place ever with the best flowers ever, I don't even know why I thought that! — Pac says with a laugh, and Fit forces himself to chuckle, just to move on from those thoughts.

Focus.

He must focus on making sure Pac will be okay.
He must focus on making sure Pac won't be hurt.
He must focus on Pac.

That's what matters.
He's what matters.

— Yeah, you're right. — He answers, looking back at Pac. — Richarlyson likes those orange daisy flowers, right? We could grab some to give him.

Pac seems even more uncomfortable with the topic, gradually growing more agitated. — Yeah, I- I could take it to him when he wakes up!

Fit stares at Pac's trembling hands, and then turns his gaze towards the beach.

— Pac... please, don't you remember? You're right here, we talked about Richas, you know that... you know why Richas isn't here with us today.

Pac seems completely uneasy, although it seems like the smile is never leaving his face.

— He's tired, that's it! — Pac's voice wavers as he says that, almost as if trying to hold back tears.

— Pac, please- — Fit is interrupted by the sound of porcelain shattering, immediately turning his attention to Pac.

Pac's cup of coffee was now just a bunch of shattered porcelain, the coffee spilled over the table and floor and- fuck, Pac's hands.

Pac still smiled, but his eyes were filled with tears.

Fit immediately got up, grabbing Pac's hands and starting to analyze it, pulling Pac ever so slightly for him to get up from the chair.

— Oh, fuck! Are you okay? Did it burn you? — Fit's worry is absurdly clear just by his tone of voice, but Pac laughs.

— Don't worry, it didn't hurt me at all! I'm just so clumsy, I always mess up things! — He says with laughter, taking a step back. With Fit's analysis, it didn't seem like Pac was badly burnt, but he was also just... not seeming okay overall. — I'm just gonna clean this dumb mess I made and- and we can go!

— Don't worry, Pac, I'll clean it.

— Fit, don't bother with that! I messed it up and I should

Fit interrupts him, touching his shoulder.

— Cleaning is my job, Pac. Please, just wait, okay?

Although hesitant, Pac took a few steps back, waiting for Fit to finish cleaning from a little distance, hugging his own arms as if to make company for himself.

It didn’t take long for Fit to clean that mess, making sure to dispose of the porcelain carefully to not put anyone in danger of cutting themselves. Fit walks up to Pac, who’s standing still in a corner, staring at the floor.

— Pac? — Fit calls, but Pac doesn't seem to hear, even though they’re quite close. — Hey, Pac?

As Fit repeats, Pac finally seems to hear, turning his face towards Fit.

— Ah, sorry, I was distracted by those cool patterns on the floor!

— It's okay. — Fit ignores the fact there are no patterns on the floor, just accepting whatever Pac says. — We can go now. I still have to take you somewhere.

— Ohh, really? I thought our trip would be over soon! I'm so happy! I knew this was the best day ever!

Pac giggles, happily walking out of the coffee shop. He grabs his warp stone, but Fit touches his shoulder.

— Come on, let's go walking.

Pac seems confused by the suggestion, especially since they already walked from Chume Labs to the Favela.

— What? Whyy...? We've already walked! We can't waste much time, — Pac insists, holding onto his warp stone. — I need to go back to Chume Labs! Richas is sleeping and-

Fit puts his hand over the warp stone, accidentally touching Pac's hands as he does that.

— Today's a beautiful day, Pac. Spend just a little bit of it with me. I'll take you to Chume Labs later if you do that.

Pac groans in a slight reluctance, but smiles.

— Alright, alright. Just because I missed you, Fit! — Pac answers, and Fit tries to smile back, but the sadness is obvious on his face.

— Yeah. I miss you too, Pac.

“Saudades.”

He remembers that word, Pac taught him that a few days ago. This feeling is clear on Fit's eyes, piercing his heart with longing.

They begin walking, and the trip is silent, at least by Fit's part. Pac keeps mumbling and talking about meaningless things, just mentioning again and again how this was the best day ever.

Fit's head hurts. He can't stand listening to Pac mumble so many lies caused by those illusions, by those damned hallucinogenic drugs.

However, Fit notices something in the corner of his eye as he's walking, leading the way. A rose.

Although seeming a bit smaller and shaped a tad bit differently, it's exactly like the one Pac gave him a few months ago.

— Ah, wait.

Normally, Fit would hesitate, even deny that idea that flew by his mind. But, at this state- at Pac's state, he doesn't hesitate to grab the rose.

He's not really careful, it's not like he has any clue on how to grab a flower, but he turns to Pac.

Now he realizes; he didn't really think about what to say once he's faced with a confused, expectant Pac.

— I, uh- You reminded me earlier of the flower you gave me and- — Fit stutters more than he talks. He doesn't know why he feels so nervous. He had to do this, it was necessary to remind Pac of truthful memories. Yet, he hesitates. His cheeks feel hot and he feels as if this wasn't something he was supposed to do.

Pac smiled. He looked confused, but he seemed... happy. Not unnervingly happy. It was simply... Pac. Smiling.

— Thanks, Fitch. That's really sweet of you... — He says with a smile, grabbing the rose and placing it on his shirt.

Fit takes a deep breath and smiles. Maybe... maybe this can work.

They kept on walking, this time both of them quietly. Pac would often mess with the rose, curiously looking at it but... fondly looking at Fit.

After around thirty more minutes, they reach their destination.

Pac seems hesitant.

— The hide n' seek..? — He asks in a mutter, staring down at the arena that he built himself. — What are we doing here, Fit?

— I just, uh-, I thought it'd be a good idea to bring you here, you know. Since you seem so excited about everything, we could... I don't know, play a game or something.

Fit is obviously trying to make an excuse right there and quite literally anybody would know that wasn't the real reason, but Pac didn't really seem to care much about it. Or anything, to be honest.

— Ahh, I'd love to, Fitch! But... — He suddenly seems anxious, biting at his nails. Although, he's still smiling. — I promised Richas I'd play with him! If I play with someone else while he's asleep, he'll be so mad at me! Can we wait just a few hours?

— Ah... — Fit takes a deep breath, trying to talk with the knot that formed in his throat. He hasn't been this emotional ever since Ramon disappeared, but seeing Pac like this is... challenging, at the very least. — I- I need to do something in a few hours. I'm sure Richas will understand.
Pac bites harder at his nails, and at this point, it seems like he's biting his own skin rather than the nails.

— Just one game, please? — Fit reaches for Pac's hands, pulling it ever so slightly. Pac doesn't seem to go against it, allowing Fit to grab his hands. His fingers were starting to bleed.

— Mmmh..... I don't knooow... — He looks like he's thinking, before he

just sighs and smiles even more. — Okay, okay! Just one game!

Fit smiles sadly. Maybe it can work. Maybe just a game can help him.

They both stare at each other for what seems like a few seconds, but they probably spend almost a minute just looking into each other's eyes.

Had Fit not stepped away to press the button to start the game, they would've probably stayed hours just investigating each other's expressions.

It takes half a second for the system to give out the roles, but Fit can hear a slightly unsettling giggle when the screen in front of them reads out:

"Seeker: Fit!"

Pac walks towards Fit, patting him on the shoulder and saying:

— Alright, Fit! I doubt you'll find me! — Fit takes a deep breath and smiles confidently, turning to face Pac.

— Well, we'll see. I will say though, I'm a very good seeker, Pac, you don't stand a chance.

— Hihi, and I'm a very good hider!

For a few seconds, it almost feels like everything was back to normal again. That they are just playing together. Fit wonders, did Pac feel like this? Is this gonna work?

But staring at the bloody fingertips of Pac, his tired, heavy and sad eyes, the slightly dirty white hoodie.... it was almost like being punched in the guts, back to a sad reality. This reality.

— I'm sure you are. — He says, his smile getting smaller, sadder. Pac

didn't seem to notice the change in demeanor. — Don't you wanna take care of that first? I don't want you getting hurt during the game.

Pac doesn't seem to know what Fit is talking about until Fit looks down at Pac's hands.

— Whaat? No, don't worry! It's fine, I'll be fine- — Pac stops talking when Fit grabs one of his hands, reaching for something in his pockets.

— Come on, Pac. I'll take care of this really quick, I just don't want you to dirtying the arena with blood, you know? — That isn't it. It obviously isn't it, but it seems like enough for Pac to quiet down.

Fit grabs a few bandages from his pocket; Ramon is- was always working with machines, so Fit just got used to carrying bandages and healing potions around, just in case Ramon got hurt.

Fit wonders how Ramon is doing.

Fit hopes he isn't hurt.

He shakes his head. There's no use thinking about this now. He slowly starts bandaging Pac's fingers, making sure that Pac wouldn't be able to hurt himself like that again, at least for today.

Fit glances at Pac's face. He looks... It's difficult to read his expression in this state, but he's smiling. Obviously. He seems quite tired, maybe even upset. There's a faint blush on his cheek, though... Fit wonders why.

Fit finishes bandaging each of Pac's hurt fingers, and smiles at him.

Pac smiles back.

It doesn't seem genuine.

Fit doesn't understand why this pained smile wounds his heart so much. — Let's start this already! — Pac says, giggling. — I missed playing with you, Fitch!

Fit cannot help but smile sadly, taking one step back. He missed this. Maybe he still misses it. When will he be able to hear Pac's genuine laughter, he wonders.

It's strange.

Missing something that is close.

Missing someone that is there.

When he finally manages to control his thoughts, Pac isn't there anymore.

For a few seconds, he becomes desperate, looking around, but he reminds himself of what they're doing.

He takes a deep breath, going to the arena once the timer has reached its end. He searches for a while, trying to get used to the idea of being without Pac. Sure, they're just playing, that was his plan, but he feels strange. Leaving Pac alone in that state worries him, it consumes his mind and makes him strangely upset. Fit shakes his head, searching for Pac in the big arena Pac himself built.

For a long while, he finds nothing. He looks inside things, on top, on the corners, and Pac is nowhere! Fit still doesn't understand how silent Pac manages to be, sure he was a thief but damn... but suddenly Fit hears a noise, and immediately turns his head. However, he sees nothing.

He walks towards the sound, looking up.

At first, he couldn't notice anything that could be the source of the sound.

But the moment he looks up he notices a shadow, and before he can even make a move he sees Pac grabbing an impulse from the top of one of the big tables, and jumping right over Fit, giggling and running away.

— You'll never catch me, Fitch! — Pac says, turning a corner. Fit runs after Pac, but the Brazilian by now is already out of his sight.

Once Fit turns that corner, Pac is already extremely distant, but Fit manages to pick up the pace, approaching Pac and reaching out for him.

— I'm the best seeker, Pac! You'll never run from me! — Fit says with a laugh, grabbing Pac's hoodie. Pac, however, seems ready to win, immediately just taking off the hoodie as soon as he feels Fit grab it, and when Fit pulls back, the white hoodie is in his hand.

He looks at Pac, seeing him without a hoodie for probably the first time. He wore a black, sleeveless shirt that showed his multiple scars all over his arms and shoulders; Fit assumes them to be from his past in prison or back to when he was a thief.

He looks really nice.

Fit blushes, getting distracted by his own feelings and thoughts, shaking his head and keeping on running.

Pac laughs, and Fit instinctively smiles just by hearing it. Fit puts Pac's hoodie over his shoulder, chasing after the Brazilian.

Fit could already feel himself getting tired, and it's noticeable that Pac was slowing down, but neither of them seem to have any plans on giving up. Unfortunately, the first one to make a mistake is Pac, who turns to look at Fit and trips over something that neither could even see what it was. Fit, in a mix of adrenaline and worry, reaches out to Pac, but somehow manages to trip himself. Not wanting to lose, he grabs Pac by the leg- almost by instinct - and pulls him.

Panting, Fit looks down, seeing Pac below him.

— Hahah- — Fit takes a deep breath before continuing — Caught you!
The American gazes over Pac's face, looking into his lovely, weirdly-shaped yellow eyes for a few seconds, noticing the way some strands of hair would fall on his face before starting to notice the Brazilian's reddened cheeks and embarrassed smile.

Maybe it's a bit late to become aware of how close their faces are.

— Ah, I- — Pac starts to say something, but Fit immediately notices his choked tone and sudden change in demeanor, his smile becoming smaller, his eyes quickly becoming watery.

Fit immediately backs off, and Pac sits down, reaching for his leg, grabbing his shin.

Worry floods the veteran's mind, thinking he hurt Pac, but with just a second thought he realizes something: He's fairly certain that he grabbed Pac's prosthetic.

— Oh, fuck, Pac, are you okay? — Fit is clearly confused when he asks, approaching Pac. Pac looks at Fit, his eyes filled with tears. He's clearly in pain.

— Me deixa em paz! — Pac screams something in Portuguese, but everything is so... strange and contradicting.

Pac smiles while simultaneously crying, his voice is filled with anguish and fear, but those feelings are suppressed by that uncanny laughter.

Fit, however, is certain of one thing: normally, that wouldn't have hurt Pac. They have played hide and seek multiple times with each other and with multiple other people, and in all of those times, Pac has never gotten hurt whilst playing this exact same way with Fit. So what the fuck

happened?

— Pac, what's wrong? — Fit reaches out for Pac, but the Brazilian slaps his hand away. — I'm sorry, let me help y-

— Me deixa em paz, Ce- — Pac instantly covers his mouth, almost as if stopping himself from continuing whatever he was saying.
Fit has no idea what Pac is saying, but the way he clutches to his prosthetic makes Fit realize something: Phantom pains...? maybe that was it. Maybe he could help.

— Pac, please tell me what's wrong, I- I can help you.

Pac still seems a bit desperate, but he shakes his head, his smile growing (and the tears keep falling).

— Everything's perfect, Fitch! I don't- I don't know why I'm like this, hahaha- — Pac, shaking, reaches into his pocket. — I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I- I need to go.

— Pac, wait, please! — Fit reaches for Pac, trying his best to grab his arm, but seconds before he could touch the Brazilian, Pac isn't there anymore; there was nothing other than a few purple particles in the air and a lonely Fit sitting on the floor. Fit seems desperate and confused for a few moments, keeping his hand close to the purple particles before they're all eventually gone.

Fuck.

Fit gets up from the floor, picking up Pac's hoodie. Now that he can pay attention to it, the sleeves of his hoodie were dirty with blood. Just thinking about how that blood got there made Fit shiver, scared for Pac's wellbeing.

Although, a thought flies by. The metalic taste of hypocrisy bitters his

mouth. How can he be so worried about the Brazilian, if he himself hurt Pac?

Fit stops walking, staring at the setting sun on the horizon. He tries to think on a brighter side, that maybe this helped Pac realize; he clings to the image of Pac's genuine smile when he gifted him that rose, but that stupid, guilty feeling still stained his heart.

Everything he did today comes to mind.

Why did Pac react like that? They always played hide and seek that way, sometimes even actually getting hurt. What did Fit trigger to hurt Pac like that? Maybe the pills... maybe something else, maybe.

The memory of Pac at the coffee shop, the conversation they had, comes to mind.

“Why would *someone like you* even keep a rose like that?”

— Fuck, fuck... I fucked it all up... — He whispers to himself, groaning and putting his hands on his face.

It seems like destiny makes it clear. This entire situation just makes that little doubt on the back of the American's mind clear. Clearer than ever.

That's all he's for. To hurt. To destroy.

How can he desire to caress when his steel hands only serve to wound?

FROFERY (FROFERYL)

JOTAEMY

Still focused (on his eyes)

Dadu | Heaven (HeavenAnarchist)

The sun has been up for a few hours now, but it shouldn't go without saying that it is beautiful. Everything today is special, even the usual giant fireball in the sky. Even if it's way too hot for a suit, especially on Chume Labs' island, Pac still thinks that it is the perfect opportunity. Now that the children are back, there is no sorrow to interrupt Pac's most important mission since he ever stepped onto this island.

Simultaneously, in a more accessible place than Chume Labs, the sun on Fit and Ramon's house is still just as hot for a suit. Fit, however, obliged, as Pac seemed way too excited to wear matching suits for this mission and he couldn't just deny his friend's ideas.

— So... you think I'm looking alright? — Fit asks, looking in the mirror, trying to fix his suit which, at this point, has no mistake to fix, really.

Ramon is staring at his father intently, almost looking at the man's soul through his skin. He writes down something on his little notebook, something Fit could not figure out for the life of him because of the boy's calligraphy (pretty and complex letters, sure, but completely unreadable), and rushes to the chest nearby, almost falling inside it whilst searching for something. When Ramon seems to finally have found it, he makes his way back to Fit, placing a rose on his father's suit.

— "Now you're looking super nice. You can officially go on your date!" — Ramon signs, and Fit's face goes slightly red. He ruffles Ramon's hair, who giggles.

— It's not... a date. You know that. — Fit argues, and Ramon holds his

Ramon holds his hand, although not moving it away from his head.

— “Yeah, yeah, but you can't tell me what it is so I'll just say it's a date!”

— Pfft, it's true... — Ramon understands that Fit just can't tell him some things, for his own good, and Fit couldn't be more glad that he has such an understanding son. — but it's not a date, my boy. I still have a lot to talk with Pac before calling it... a date.

Ramon giggles. Fit smiles.

He wonders if Pac is feeling as anxious as him.

And if he knew just how sweaty Pac's hands are while he tries to grab all his stuff, he'd be sure they're equally as anxious.

Pac feels his face going red out of nowhere, having to physically stop himself from letting out little screams and giggling to himself.

— Se recompõe! — He says, looking at a mirror that he placed on his side of the Chume Labs Warehouse. — Foque na missão, foque na missão...

(Recompose yourself! Focus on the mission, focus on the mission...)

He takes a deep breath, looking at the little rats running around the table and jumping on the pocket of Pac's hoodie.

After finally managing to put on some composure, Pac grabs his phone, sending Fit a message.

Oiii, big boy —

Fit is startled by the sudden notification on his communicator. It's not quite a phone like everyone else on the island; he has a technological interface on his prosthetic arm that kind of works like a phone.

He giggles to himself when he sees Pac's message, his cheeks going slightly red. — Oi, Pac!

Are you ready? I'm just a little bit anxiousKKKKKK —

— Yeah, yeah! We can meet up in that place, if you get what i mean

Who knows... I may or may not get it.. hihi —
I'm just joking with u, see you there! —

Pac can't help but giggle, bringing his phone close to his chest with the stupidest, brightest smile he's had for awhile. He stands there for a little, before he realizes what he's doing, going red because of how dumb he must look. Pac just can't understand how or why he feels this way, and he quickly puts away his phone, placing it in his pocket - which he knows that the rats will end up playing with, especially the music app - to grab the warpstone, teleporting to the rebellion base.

Fit takes a deep breath, closing the communicator and finally taking away his eyes from Pac's messages. Ramon is staring at him, arms crossed, before eventually he just shoves Fit out the door.

— “Go, go, Fit! My future pai is waiting for you!” — He signs and closes the door on Fit.

— Not your future- Ramon! — Fit says, cheeks red, and Ramon giggles from behind the door. Fit chuckles, letting out a sigh. — Don't forget to check on your machines down the elevator, aight?

Fit knows Ramon is responsible with his stuff, so he just takes a deep breath, taking a step towards the waystone. He touches the cold stone, feeling a tingling sensation on his hand that spreads to his arm and to his chest, before eventually his whole body is momentarily numb. His vision goes purple, then black, and in the literal blink of an eye, he's somewhere else.

He's finally stepping on old wood that creaks when he starts leaving, the dense forest around him feeling less warm than the rest of the island. He knows exactly where to go, following those same steps he always carefully takes when he's around.

Fit finally reaches that old building, and as his eyes lay upon the entrance of said place, his heart excitedly skips a beat as he finally sees who he had been so excited to meet up with.

— Oi, Fitch! — Accent-filled tone floods his ears with the melody of that familiar greeting, and Fit is unable to contain that smile, once again feeling his heart run more than it should just because of this one single person. He looks up and down, subconsciously admiring Pac's beauty, silently taking into all the details this man carried. His slightly messy hair because of the wind, his contagious, bright smile, those beautiful brown eyes that reflected the sunlight in a particularly captivating way... not to mention the black suit he wore, Pac's excitement was clear as he saw how both of them were matching.

Fit takes a step closer, and Pac takes two more, and before they even realize, they're face to face with each other.

— Oi, Pac. — Fit greets, and he sees Pac smile. — Y- Uh, you look nice. Pac giggles embarrassedly, taking one step back.

— Thank you, uh- you- — Pac tries to move his mouth and say something, but he catches himself stuttering over embarrassed giggles and struggling to speak English. He glances at Fit, seeing him equally as embarrassed, blushing and smiling, looking nervously to the side.

He is unable to not notice the nice suit Fit had put on. It was fairly simple, but the details made Fit look extremely good. Pac felt his heart skip a beat when he noticed the little red flower on his friend's suit. It was an unspoken agreement that a rose was extremely meaningful, and Pac couldn't be happier Fit had it with him.

— You look really nice too, you know! — He says, panicking a bit, but clearly meaning it.

— Hah, t- thank you! — Fit says and clears his throat, trying to stop the blush on his face. — Anyway... are you ready? We've got a lot to investigate today.

— I was born ready! — Pac stated proudly, walking towards the building and entering. As Fit enters the code on the door, Pac recites the numbers in his head, trying to see if he still remembers the many digits to open it. Unfortunately, he's off by only two, and he murmurs 'ow..' before going down the elevator with Fit.

Once they reach the "library" of the rebellion, Pac excitedly goes to grab the books they received a few weeks ago explaining the mission. Both had a mutual agreement to analyze their mission again before going.

Pac sits down on the floor, and Fit leans against the wall, not even noticing how he smiled at Pac.

Pac looked up, his yellow eyes finding that familiar hazel tone before falling upon the man's smile, a light blush appearing on his cheeks. He clears his throat, starting to look around, a bit embarrassed.

— Uh, - I was reading about the mission again. It seems pretty straightforward... — Pac finally looks back at Fit's face again, who seems to be paying so much attention to Pac's voice that maybe he's not even understanding anything at all. — We need to gather information on what Foolish is doing, apparently he's been called for a meeting today with... Cucurucho?

Fit took a few seconds to answer, almost as if he had been finally able to comprehend what the words truly meant.

— It's unfortunate that he's allied with the federation. — He says, and Pac

nods. Both were a bit surprised that their mission required spying on a friend, but they know that it's for the best after all. — But in any case, I think we can do this, right?

Pac nods again, getting up from the floor and grabbing a few items he left on the chest a day before. He spent almost two entire days working to get a bunch of stuff for their mission, and Fit almost feels bad because he didn't help.

— Yeah! I've got a lot of invisibility potions and the coordinates that were in the book! — Fit smiles proudly at Pac's statement and then seems confused. — Oh, nice, you managed to get the encrypted coordinates! I'm gonna be honest, Pac, I couldn't figure it out for the life of me. — Pac laughs nervously when Fit says that, looking to the side.

— I may have asked Bagi for a bit of help, you know... but I did help her! You could say I am a bit of a 'dedetive' myself! — Fit laughs. When they're solving enigmas, Fit often hears Pac call Bagi a good *detetive*, which he assumes to be the correct way of saying detective in Portuguese.

— I'm sure you are. — Fit chuckles, and for a few milliseconds of silence he zones out observing Pac's smile, listening to his silly giggles.

Pac looks at his communicator, and then up at Fit.

— I think we need to go, Fit... Foolish is not even showing up on the map anymore. — Fit nods. He always thought it was a bit weird how people could easily find each other on the map and have people's live location, but well... no time to question it, anyway.

Pac grabs the little purple rock on his pocket again, but Fit interrupts:

— Wait, where are you going? — Pac seems confused by Fit's question, only then realizing that he still didn't show the coordinates to Fit.

— Ah, shit... you haven't been there yet! I'm so dumb, I'm sorry! — Pac apologizes, covering his face with his hands. He was so excited for this mission and he just completely forgot to tell Fit to get to the coordinates before.

— It's okay, don't worry! You can teleport there and send me coordinates, I'll be there as quickly as I can. — Fit hesitates, but takes Pac's wrists ever so slightly, pulling them slightly down so he can look at him.

— But then... — Pac sighs, upset that he forgot. And then suddenly his face lights up; Fit knows that face, Pac has an- — Idea! I have an idea! Once, when I was holding Richas, he accidentally teleported me to Felps' house with him!

— Holy shit, do you think you can do it? — Fit asks, excited. He always forgets that Richarlyson always finds a way to break rules, even if said rules include the laws of physics.

— Uh, we can try, but I'd need to- — Pac looks at the man before him, and then to his hands, which are still being held by Fit.

Fit notices Pac looking at his hand, and lets go immediately, embarrassed. — Uh, sorry- — He mutters, but Pac interrupts.

— No, it's fine! I'd- uh- I kind of, you know, need to hold your hand so we can go- but it doesn't need to be your hands, I could just hold your shoulder, it could probably work too, hahahah- — He laughs, embarrassedly looking to the sides. Fit can't help but smile, also seeming slightly flustered.

— If it's alright with you, it's alright with me, Pac, don't worry. — Both of them smile at each other, Fit reaching his hand out towards Pac, waiting patiently.

Pac happily grabs Fit's hand, although completely flustered by it. He really

didn't understand this feeling or why he only felt like this with Fit, but... it wasn't bad. Not at all.

Pac holds the warpstone on his left hand, his right one completely still, holding Fit's hand. The little purple stone floats on his hand, emitting a strange sound that almost everyone was already used to. For half a second, the stone releases very few purple particles that wrap around Pac's body, before he simply disappears. Although, this time, it felt different.

Fit saw, for the other half of that second, Pac disappearing, and for a moment he felt disappointed that it didn't work. But then he realized: he still felt Pac's hand. It was strangely similar to something that happened to him before: a feeling of something that isn't there anymore. But this wasn't painful. It felt calming, even.

And the same happened to him, in the other half of the next second, purple particles coming from his hand engulfed his vision, and he was somewhere else, now truly holding Pac's hand again.

— Holy shit. — He curses.

— It worked! Let's go, Fit, it worked! — Pac says, looking at Fit, who smiles excitedly.

— You're a genius, Pac! — Fit takes a step closer, seeing Pac giggle, flustered at the compliment.

— It's just... It was Richas that discovered this, don't give me all the credit.

— But well, you did remember it at the right time, no?

Pac giggles again.

— I guess so.

They both go silent for a simple moment, before Pac eventually realizes that they were still holding hands. He pulled his hand away, and Fit almost looked slightly disappointed for a second before it turned into embarrassment.

— Uh- In- In the book it said that we should start our investigation here before Foolish arrives, we- should start looking around. — Pac instructed, and Fit nodded, finally starting to look around.

Both of them were behind a few trees, and they could see that a bit further away was a building, white being its main color with hints of moss. It was clearly a federation building, but hidden inside this... swamp.

— Yeah, you're right. We should get going. — Fit seems more serious as he says that. Pac tries to do the same, but quickly gets distracted as he sets eyes on Fit's expression. He can't be serious with Fit around, it's like the silliness gets out of hand when they're together for some reason.

— Ah, by the way! I brought these, you should keep some. — Pac hands Fit a few glass bottles, it seemed to have nothing inside but Fit could feel it heavy. — I made a bunch of invisibility potions.

— Nice work, Pac. Let's go. — He says as he immediately drinks the potion, Pac doing the same as soon as he notices the other man's action. Just like expected, it tasted like nothing. Not in the way that water tastes, it simply felt like nothing. An indescribable feeling for those who never drank it, anyway.

And it didn't feel like anything. Truly, the potion lives up to expectations.

Fit could see some particles floating around where Pac was. From the point of view of someone unaware of his presence, it was hardly visible.

Pac assumes they parted ways, but he can't be quite sure anymore, as he walks towards that building, specifically the door. Although he doesn't

plan on trying to go inside just yet, as the door seems to have a code that he can't risk getting wrong.

Fit knows for sure that they have distanced themselves, as he keeps an eye on the particles and the very light sounds of Pac's footsteps. While Pac stays on the door, Fit walks towards the back, trying to find something interesting. It seemed fairly... empty. Just a building that they couldn't get inside yet.

He walks around trying to find something else, but is not able to. However, he does hear something. Different, quick-paced steps that are definitely approaching rapidly. Fit reaches for his communicator to warn Pac, but notices that he has no time as he sees Foolish approaching the door rapidly, and Pac's steps stop.

Fit stares at the communicator on his hand, hiding behind some bushes. He could only hope Pac knew what he was doing...

Pac has no fucking clue on what he's doing.

He got distracted in a second, and Foolish was talking to himself right in front of him, trying to remember the code to the door and saying a bunch of numbers out loud. If Pac moves an inch right now it's certain that Foolish will hear him, as there's a tree right on the only possible escape that wouldn't alarm Foolish.

— Okay! One, two, three, four, five... huh, uuhhhh..... What even was the code? They should write these things... — Foolish seems to not remember as he debates with himself what are the numbers.

Fit is getting nervous. Foolish is still talking to himself, trying to remember the code, and Pac is still right besides him. He knows that Pac can probably just stay super quiet, it's a talent that he has (not even Fit can hear him most times), but there's half a chance that the duration of the potion was running out, and Pac couldn't drink another one because it

would obviously be seen by Foolish.

Fit acts on impulse, simply scared that Pac might get caught. He grabs the first rock he can find and throws it with all his force towards a tree a bit behind Foolish, hitting an apple at just the exact angle where it'd fall on Foolish's head, and also hit the tree right after so it'd alarm the birds on it.

— Ow, what the fuck! — Foolish turns to the tree, taking three steps towards it.

The moment Foolish turns and the birds start being extremely noisy as they fly away, Fit reaches out towards the door that now wasn't that far away, grabbing Pac as fast as he could and pulling him to the bush he was hiding in.

It seems, however, he didn't take into consideration that Pac could be facing the opposite way, and grabbing his ‘roommate’ by the hoodie might not be the most friendly (much less romantic) thing to do, specially not if said roommate ends up falling on him at the exact moment the invisibility potion runs out.

— Oh shit, Pac, I'm sorr-

Pac immediately turns to Fit, placing a finger over his lips and whispering:
— Shh... wait.

Fit blushes ever so slightly with the finger over his lips, looking at Pac, who's now also visible. He's looking at Foolish, seeming to wait for something.

Foolish is complaining about the apple, apparently, and he turns back to the door.

— Huh, ah yeah, this door doesn't need a code, it's the stupid little card they gave! — Maybe the apple reminded Foolish of that, or maybe he was

playing around, or maybe he's just... well, like that. But in any case, as soon as Pac hears that, he drinks another potion and gets ready, getting up- and that's the last thing Fit sees of Pac. The moment Foolish opens the door, Fit sees the floating particles following him inside just before the door closes.

He waits for a few seconds, waiting until he can't hear Foolish anymore, and the moment he thinks it's safe, he runs towards the door.

— Pac? Pac, you okay? — He asks, worried, unable to hear nor see anything that could indicate that Pac was there through the small "window" on the door.

— Fitch! — Pac's voice startles Fit, who almost flinches. — You saved me, of course I'm okay.

— Sorry for pulling you down by the hoodie, I didn't mean to hurt you. — Fit says, embarrassed.

From Pac's point of view, he could just feel his heart warm to the scene of Fit's worried face. Fit couldn't tell where Pac was, so he couldn't choose a place to settle his eyes, but Pac settled his on Fit's. Seeing his friend's worried expression, with the slightly reddened cheeks... it just made his feelings even more confusing, almost like the feeling of butterflies on his stomach but a hundred times more complex and difficult to explain.

— So, now we need to find a way for me to get in... — Fit says, and Pac giggles, confusing him.

— I got it, Fit.

And suddenly, the door opened.

Fit is taken aback, but is quick to walk inside.

— How'd you even do that?

Pac laughs again, seeing as Fit is confusedly looking for him before finding the particles and being able to somewhat settle his eyes on where Pac should be.

— When Foolish walked in and put the card back on his backpack, I was able to grab it.

— Woah... Nice, Pac. — If Fit was able to see Pac's face, he just knew he'd see a flustered, embarrassed smile, alongside blushing cheeks. — Good job. But do you know where Foolish went?

Pac goes quiet for a few seconds.

— I'm... not sure. My first instinct was to come back to the door. — He admits, and Fit sighs, although clearly not disappointed.

— Don't worry, Pac. Our first objective is to find him again, then. Let's go. — Fit drank another one of the potions, and kept an eye on the particles that showed where Pac was. — Try not to go too far away, Pac.

Fit hears Pac mumble a "mhm" before they keep going in silence. Fit can't hear Pac, but he can keep an eye on the particles, following him.

Pac, on the other hand, can't quite see where Fit is when he looks back, but he can hear Fit's very subtle footsteps.

Their trust in each other is mutual, but so is worry. They know that both of them can deal with the situation, but if anyone else was there it'd be impossible not to notice how their eyes kept searching for a sign of each other.

However, Fit made one mistake. While he kept searching for Pac with his eyes, he did not realized he stepped onto a warp plate.

All Pac heard before Fit got teleported was-

— Oh, fuck-!

And suddenly, silence. Pac immediately runs towards the warp plate, he quickly realizes that this was no base, but a labyrinth. A maze.

And apparently, some corridors led to this warp plate.

Pac found himself in a big, empty hallway.

— Fit? — Pac muttered, unable to hear Fit's footsteps. — Are you here?

He looks around, searching for the particles, but unable to find them due to the lights being off, the only sound being a distant conversation.

The effect of his invisibility potion finally runs out. He reaches for his pocket to grab another one, but suddenly, shivers run down his spine as he feels a hand on his shoulder, and Pac turns his back, almost screaming when-

— Hey, chill, it's me. — Hearing Fit's voice immediately stopped him from yelling, but the adrenaline is still present as he feels his heart beating faster. — I think we should hold on with the invisibility potions for now. How many more you've got?

— Uh... Two more. — Pac answers, and as he says that, Fit's invisibility finally runs out, and they're both visible again.

Pac can finally see Fit's face, and he looks at Pac with a little smile, staying silent for a few seconds.

However, something clicks and he seems confused as he notices something.

— Two? That's weird, I still got four. — Fit says, grabbing one of the bottles. — You might have given me one extra.

Fit holds out the potion towards Pac, waiting for him to take it.

Pac touches the potion, but lightly pushes Fit's hand back. It's almost like he's not surprised that he had less. If anything, his face just shows he's guilty; he did it on purpose.

— Ah... No, I think it's fine. You should keep it. — Fit seems confused, and resists Pac pushing his hand. — Really, Fit, I'd rather know you have more than take one from you.

— Pac, come on. We'll have an equal amount and we'll both be safe.

Pac looks to the side, clearly hesitant. Fit couldn't understand why.

Suddenly they hear voices. To be honest, a voice. Someone incessantly talking, about to open the door.

Pac is about to drink the potion, but Fit is quick to grab him and pull him behind a pillar, putting his hands against Pac's mouth.

— Shh... if you drink it, he'll hear us.

Pac is suddenly reminded by the obnoxious noise that opening the bottles make, and he nods.

Pac is unable to see, but Fit watches as Foolish turns a corridor, confidently walking towards a room while talking about a topic he didn't quite understand, followed by three - not quite diverse - faces.

The most noticeable one is the familiar (and unpleasant) face of Cucurucho, walking right besides Foolish.

One a bit less recognizable is one Fit had heard a lot about coming from Tubbo: Agent 18. Apparently, he and Tubbo were not on good terms. In other words, all that Fit knows is that Tubbo and Agent 18 have beef.

And there's one that he has absolutely no damn clue on who it is. They're exactly like the other workers, but they wore something like a lab coat, and had a big, magenta ribbon on each ear.

The four walk inside a meeting room, and Fit quietly lets out a breath he didn't even know he was holding.

He finally looks at Pac again, and red takes over his face as he realizes he kept his hand on Pac's mouth during all this time (which had been only a few seconds to be fair, but it was still a little too much).

Pac is absolutely embarrassed, yet he didn't reach for Fit's hand, trusting completely Fit's decisions and plans.

Fit quickly takes his hand away from Pac's mouth, who has an embarrassed, trembly smile. Fit is about to say sorry, but Pac notices, putting a finger above his lips.

Yeah, the mission. He needs to be quiet. He can apologize later...

He can't help but feel slightly bad.

They don't move, both standing extremely close as they eavesdrop on what seemed to be a meeting. Cucurucuo talked, and it was an awkward silence for a little while, even with Foolish there.

They were talking about a murder.

The murders from before the purgatory?
No, it's unlikely. They're saying it happened inside the federation building. That's strange.

Fit's eyes divert from the door and focus, for a few moments, on Pac's face. He stares at the scar on Pac's cheek, and for a few seconds he really wants to touch it. Caress it. He shakes his head, looking back at the iron door from behind the pillar.

He can't quite focus, for some reason. He doesn't understand. This... lack of attention was not something he was quite used to.

Trying to pay attention to the conversation again, he hears something completely different. A shot.

He sees Pac flinch at the sound of the gun, and it’s almost as if Pac reaches for Fit but stops, their hands brushing against one another.

Fit couldn't focus at all now.

He heard something about an Elena being arrested. He'd assume that Elena was the unknown worker, but he couldn't quite think straight, feeling warmth run throughout all his body. Although he should feel nervous by the mission, all he can feel is a strange happiness, an embarrassment that made him feel so unlike himself.

Foolish and Agent 18 walk out of the room, dragging the worker in handcuffs. They walk away, now not towards the corridor but towards the warp plate that both Fit and Pac came from.

Fit feared that they'd be seen, but thankfully this “Elena” was making quite the scandal while being dragged away, so the attention that could indicate that they were there went towards that situation.

A few moments later, they heard a teleportation noise, but Fit wasn't certain. Pac touched Fit's shoulder, and Fit looked back at him.

Pac opened his mouth to say something, but it seemed like he got distracted. He looked slightly up, his yellow-ish eyes fixated on Fit's,

almost as if trying to decipher that hazel color.

Fit looked at Pac's face, then to his mouth, then back at his eyes.

Pac quickly realized that Fit looked at his mouth, and went completely red. He was sure he was going crazy, and embarrassment made him feel that stupid feeling again, butterflies on his stomach, something he never thought he'd feel with this intensity.

— Uh, - I- I think we can go investigate that room. — Pac says, and Fit immediately backs off, walking towards the iron door and pressing the button to open it.

— Y-Yeah! You're right, Pac, we should- — Fit laughs nervously, clearly flustered, and as he goes through the door, he notices far too late that it was not just a door, but a scanner.

Not only did the device get all of his items, but it also made a deafening alarm echo through the building.

Shit.

Pac runs towards Fit, but Fit stops him.

— Hold on! That's going to get your stuff, don't come in here!

Pac saw the worry on Fit's face, but that couldn't stop him from feeling worried himself. — Uh, what do we do?! We need to get away!

Fit looked at the now empty meeting room, and then looked at Pac.

— Let's go, we have no time. — Fit grabs Pac's hand, and Pac immediately grabs the warpstone in his pocket. However, for some reason, it simply does not work.

— It's not working, Fit! — Pac desperately says, but Fit just sighs and starts running, not letting go of Pac's hand.

— If there's something you know how to do, is escape, so let’s find a way to get out of here! — Fit answers, and both turn the corridors, trying every single warp plate they see, but every single one is deactivated.

Pac is trying his best to keep calm, but being stuck somewhere truly does not help. He takes several deep breaths, but as he hears a bunch of footsteps, his heart accelerates again.

They turn back, and see a few federation workers coming their direction, some of them holding guns, others holding simple iron swords.

— Fuck, we'll have to deal with them. — Fit says, and he instinctively reaches for his trident but it's not there. — Ah, goddamn, fuck it.

Pac grabs his bow, and as he reaches for an arrow, he realizes he has to let go of Fit's hand and so, he hesitates for half a second before doing so, grabbing an arrow.

Fit launches himself forward, running towards the workers. He's gonna have to solve that with his fists, apparently.

One of the workers points their gun towards Fit, but Pac shoots first, the arrow going through the workers arm and stopping him from shooting at Fit.

Fit continues the job, punching the same worker with his prosthetic arm. The worker stumbles back in pain and immediately passes out, getting in the way of the other three.

Pac's ears ring when another one of the workers shoots, but fortunately for him, the worker misses him, and he's about to shoot another arrow, but he hesitates, fearing that he'll hit Fit.

Fit looks at one of the workers with a sword, and he reacts just in time to block an attack with his prosthetic arm, but unfortunately for him that wasn't the only one.

Pac hesitated, but as he saw the second worker raise a sword towards Fit's torso, he had to do something. He immediately shots, the arrow going precisely through the worker's head. Fit looks at Pac, knowing right there that his life was saved.

It's as if time stops for that mere second they look at each other, Fit's expression demonstrating a proud smile, a loving gaze.

Pac can feel the adrenaline pumping through his veins, but as he sees Fit's smile, he cannot help but smile back, his shaky expression demonstrating his worry, but with a pinch of something more; maybe, just maybe- if this time he's not wrong- love.

Time comes back as soon as they realize it's not over yet, and Fit kicks the worker holding the sword against his arm, throwing him against the wall. The worker seemed to still be alive and conscious, but Pac is quick to shoot him just seconds after Fit kicks him.

Only one is standing. This one held the gun shakily, seeing as they had absolutely no chance against the two. They try to run, and although Pac feels pity, he knows that the objective of the mission was to not be seen by anybody; and he shoots. The arrow goes through the last standing worker, who falls to the ground.

Pac puts down his bow, taking a deep breath. Although, he's immediately worried again when he hears Fit grunting, running towards him.

— Oh, gosh, are you okay? — He asks, looking at Fit putting his prosthetic hand on his shoulder, pressuring it.

— Are *you* okay? — Fit immediately runs his eyes through Pac, looking for

any type of bruise.

— I'm- I'm okay, but what happened? — Pac tries to look at Fit's shoulder, and when Fit moves away the metal hand, Pac sees that it's bleeding.

Then, he realizes.

When the bullet missed him, it was because it hit Fit first.

— It's okay. I'm used to it. We need to go. — Fit says worriedly, looking seriously at Pac.

— I can take care of it, please- you're bleeding! — Pac tries to convince Fit, but it doesn't seem to work.

— I've bled much more than this. — Fit places his prosthetic hand on top of Pac's shoulder. — I'll be okay.

Pac sighs, knowing that Fit is right.

— Can I take care of it later, then? — He asks, and Fit smiles.

— Of course. Once we're out of here.

Pac nods, and they both begin walking away from there. Pac looks back at the workers, feeling a sting of regret pierce through his heart, but he knows that at the end of the day, it was for a greater good.

They both begin running through the corridors, careful to not make much noise but also rapid enough to not have any more workers catch up with them.

All of these new federation buildings are starting to be more and more confusing, turns and turns and they never get anywhere.

Every once in a while Pac tests the warpstone, to check if it was functioning again, but it never did.

They eventually reach another room, but they have absolutely no time to analyze anything because as soon as they reach the place, another alarm rings all throughout the room, and footsteps are heard in the distance.

Fortunately for them, this room has a warp plate in it. Fit runs towards it, but Pac stays behind. Fit immediately stops what he's doing and looks back at Pac, seeing that Pac is looking for something in a chest.

— Pac, we have no time! What are you doing?!

— Hold on, I- I just need something!

Fit runs towards Pac, grabbing his wrist, but not tightly.

— We need to go! — Fit insists, and Pac finally grabs whatever it was that he wanted, leaving the chest open as they run towards the warp plate.

Suddenly, everything is quiet, and everything Pac can feel is Fit holding his wrist, unable to see anything through a purple fog.

Suddenly, they're... somewhere.

Somewhere they recognize, atleast. The sudden wind and view of the setting sun on the horizon makes them realize that they're at the very end of the giant wall.

Pac is catching his breath when he finally gets there, sitting down.

Fit, on the other hand, is still worried, and he uses all his strength to break the warp plate's crystal, making sure that nobody could get to them there.

Fit has a slight feeling that the rebellion might have a hand on why this

warp plate brought them here, but he's really too tired to know.

He sits down besides Pac, both breathless and unable to speak.

The first one to break the silence was Fit.

— Holy fuck.

Pac nodded.

— Truly, *holy fuck.* — Pac repeats, emphasizing the phrase.

When Pac is finally able to remember Fit's wound, he doesn’t even say anything, just grabbing a few bandages and healing potions from his backpack. He hands Fit the healing potions, starting to bandage Fit's arm.

Fit doesn't really complain nor disagrees, simply drinking the entire healing potion in one go. Pac lets out a relieved sigh when he finishes with the bandages, focusing on the horizon, seeing the sunset reflect on the ocean.

— Hey, Pac? — Fit says.

— Yeah?

— You did good.

Pac smiles, looking back at Fit.

— We did good, Fit.

Fit chuckles.

— What was it on the chest? — Fit asks, and Pac seems a bit confused. — The one that you were searching for at the last minute?

Rather than confused, he seems embarrassed.

— I- Uh... I learned a few things and I realized that the scanner took your stuff there. I had no time to get everything but...

Pac reaches his hand out towards Fit and something with a blue-ish green hue materializes on it. Fit is taken aback, expression filled with the clear surprise as he sees Pac holding his trident.

— Holy shit, Pac! You- you got my trident back! — Fit smiles excitedly, grabbing the trident again. — Thank you so much!

— It's alright... It's something so special to you, I couldn't let them take it from you.

Pac smiles at Fit, and they just both stare at each other for a little, but Pac gets distracted by the clock on his communicator.

— Oh my gosh- I really need to go, Fit. — He warns, getting up. Fit does the same.

— It's okay, don't worry. Just be here tomorrow so we can write the mission report together. — Fit says, and Pac nods.

They stay quiet for a while, gazes lingering on each other before Pac eventually finds his interest in Fit's suit; more specifically, the flower on his chest.

Fit notices Pac's eyes over the rose, and he doesn't hesitate to carefully take it out of the suit, reaching it out towards Pac, waiting for him to grab it.

Pac can see the moon rising behind Fit, and Fit can see the sun setting behind Pac; a cycle is done. Night has finally arrived.

Pac is clearly flustered as he takes the rose, putting it on his own suit. — Thanks, Fit. I see you tomorow?

— Of course, Pac. — He smiles, looking as Pac grabs his waystone.

— Tchau, tchau, Fitch! — Pac says goodbye, his accent returning as he talks more nervously. The purple particles take over Pac's body, and in the blink of an eye, he's not there anymore.

— Tchau, Pac...

Fit smiles towards the ocean, seeing the last ray of sunlight.

KALLIFLOUR

It's weird
I've never really talked about this with anyone but Mike, but-
I don't know, I feel like you understand in a way that nobody else does
SAVE ME
BIO

Cure It 'Cause I Can't Ignore It (If It's Love)

Lio (vex_glitch)

Fit's prosthesis had been through a lot in the years that he'd had it. It had gone through its fair share of repairs, and even a replacement after his final fight with Rusher had left it bent and warped after the shield he'd held in that hand had taken so many hits.

It was easy enough to find someone to do the repairs in the wasteland, there were countless people with artificial limbs and nearly as many with the skills to make and repair them. It was rare however to find someone you trusted to do the repairs. All the repairs that Fit'd had done in 2b2t had been from basemates, save for the one emergency fix-up someone from Team Veteran had done back during the Rusher War. Even after moving to Quesadilla Island, it was hard to trust someone with a weakness as big as his arm. Having his arm disarmed and useless while someone worked on it, leaving him vulnerable and open sent a shiver down his spine.

He was lucky his son was so good with machines. So far he'd gotten the little maintenance that he'd needed done from Ramón and that had been that.

Purgatory though was a different story. It wasn't because he didn't trust the people around him, on team Green Ninjas, or later on team Soulfire, that he'd neglected the state of his metal arm, it was just that he'd been so busy, too wrapped up in the hectic nature of Purgatory to really pay attention.

And sure it bothered him, but even just the damp, humid air of the hellish island they were on made Fit's prosthesis uncomfortable. And after that, well, it became hard to tell what damage came from where, and with every

fight coming one after the other, Fit barely had enough time to switch armor and sharpen his axe before they were thrown back into combat.

He was alone at Green base when the hunger disaster hit. It was hard enough to deal with the pains wracking his stomach, something he would have been able to handle a few months prior, but he'd had the luxury of frequent meals on Quesadilla, and was no longer used to the stretches he'd go without food in the wastes.

He was making his way to the water, eating melon after melon as it did little to stave off the inflated hunger, when he felt red hot pain slash across his back.

Whirling around, he saw a large tiger with red eyes, growling as it bared its teeth, swiping a clawed paw out towards Fit. He dodged the slash, but it left him vulnerable as the tiger lunged forward to bite. Fit barely got his prosthesis up to protect himself, wincing when he heard the fangs puncture the metal. He was caught off guard by the speed of the tiger as it reared back to attack again, and Fit felt his hunger dwindle away, sharp aching pains shooting through his abdomen again.

Panic flooded through him at the thought of respawn before he forced himself to calm down as the tiger's fangs sunk into his body. This wasn't 2b2t, as much as the adrenaline rushes and celebrated violence reminded him of home. This island's respawn was as reliable as Quesadilla's, and he knew he was going to respawn back at the base. This wasn't 2b2t's shitty reliability, this wasn't the wastes where dying at the wrong time left you stranded in the void forever. He'd experienced the respawn here even, after falling to their base on the first day. He hadn't even panicked, even though there was little opportunity to panic, falling to your death leaves fairly little room for that compared to watching the damage tick down your health slowly.

The tiger bit into Fit's neck, and then he was respawning in the jungle. He rushed back to retrieve his things, only to see the tiger lounging across his body, lazily chewing on his remains. Fit growled angrily, rushing forward to kill the

damn thing, only to feel claws slashing across his throat and teeth sinking into his chest.

He died a second time, even angrier now as he led the tiger from his bodies, and into the water, hitting it a few times with his prosthesis before dying a third time, finally able to retrieve his belongings from his first corpse.

Fit had been trying to let his team know about the new missions when Tubbo, Bad, and Pac had shown up. Seeing the glint in the former two sent a thrill of adrenaline down his spine as he took off running. It wasn't until he heard Pac's voice yelling that he realized. Pac had promised not to kill him, had promised that he'd be safe from his roommate's violent task, in exchange for protection from his own.

And yet, here Pac was, chasing behind Fit as he weaved through the trees, trying to evade his pursuers.

He could barely make out what the Brazilian was saying, only able to hear the shouts of "Sorry Fit," and "I tried to stop them."

It all passed in a blur after that, focusing on holding back the attacks from Tubbo and Bad. He thought he saw Pac sitting a few feet away at one point, but he was moving too fast to really focus on that.

They finally cornered him by the ocean, and he got a few good hits in before Tubbo got a solid hit across the side of his shield, knocking him off balance. He heard something snap, though whether that was something in his arm or just the wood of his shield he couldn't tell. Taking advantage of his momentary falter Bad sent the sword right through Fit's exposed side, and Fit could feel the pain flood through him as he fell to the ground.

Fit sucked in a breath as he gritted his teeth against the pain. He was dying. He was already bleeding out on the floor, but Bad was swinging his sword down to finish the job.

The world abruptly slammed into darkness, and the pain stopped.

Fit was halfway through the flag's pole with his axe when Phil slammed into the side of him. He brought his prosthesis up to block the strike with his shield, hearing the metal creak as it absorbed the blow. The contact, and the way the hit pushed his already abused and broken prosthesis further into his residual limb made that tingling electricity spark up his shoulder and across the side of his pectoral. He stumbled for a second, trying to keep his grip on his shield even as the electric signals to his artificial limb seemed to glitch out, his elbow bending without him meaning to, and his grip loosening dangerously. Somehow Fit managed to not drop his shield as he ran away from the flag zone.

The avian sprinted after him, and though Fit had stumbled to keep his footing in the sand for a few seconds, he was able to outrun Phil until he got back to Soulfire's side, where Tina and Bad were waiting to intercept the other man.

Fit left them to take care of the avian and readjusted his grip on his shield, rolling his shoulder and trying to ignore the electrical pain shooting up his nerves as he made his way back over to the red flags. There were still twelve minutes left in the round.

"Ramón! Ramón!" Fit could see his little boy sitting behind the unbreakable partition. He was covered in dirt, the grime matted into his skin, his clothes, his hair. He was missing the brown jacket he always wore, instead in a stained white shirt that looked too big for him. His dark curls that Fit tried his very best to keep clean and taken care of were frizzy and caked in dried mud, tangled and outgrown, falling into his face and past his ears.

"Ramón! Ramón!" Fit called out again as his son pulled out one of his white signs to write.

'took u long enough to find me.'

Fit let out a huff of a laugh, shaking his head. Of course his son would say something like that after going missing for months.

':)'

Fit chuckled wetly, feeling a lump in his throat after finally seeing his son once again.

"Ramón, I missed you so much," Fit scrubbed a hand down his face, surely smearing the dirt and sweat and grime that was caked to his skin (definitely not wiping tears thank you very much), "I missed you so much my baby boy."

Fit was taken over by another message from The Watcher, informing them that they would be remaining on the island forever. As soon as he returned to his body, Fit growled in frustration, smacking his open palm against the invisible barrier in between him and Ramón.

He was so close. He was only feet from his baby boy after months without him, yet he was still so far. Fit pulled his hand to a fist, landing a solid punch into the seemingly indestructible material. He kept punching, trying to break through the invisible material, only stopping when he heard Bagi's voice next to him,

"Oh Ramón, your mustache, are you okay?"

"I'll get you out of there Ramón, I'll find a way." He kept hitting the barrier blocks, not hearing Ramón's conversation with Bagi as he tried to break through.

He knew it was impossible.

He didn't stop.

"I'm trying to get you out Ramón!" He stopped as Ramón started writing another sign, "You're going to be okay Ramón, I knew you'd survive." He let

out a breath that was shakier than he expected, "I knew you would, kid."

'im waiting fit, thank u'

Fit smiled, going back to punching the barriers. He could feel the metal of his prosthesis buckling under the force, digging in around his residual limb and into the skin of his shoulder. The limb was designed to be able to handle punching and force like this, but after the beating it had taken with hardly any repairs during Purgatory, it had been weakened.

Even while the others surrounded Max and the detonator in his hand, Fit kept punching at the walls. There was no way, not even a dent had been made, the material still smooth and flawless as it had been in the minutes earlier.

A tall figure materialized in the corner of the room, and then it was speaking– in The Watcher's voice. And then ElQuackity was there, decked out in robes covered in eye iconography, agreeing to stand by The Watcher's side. And then The Watcher set off its last disaster, and the earth was shaking, and the ceiling was caving, dirt and stone falling into the room, and onto them, and Fit barely turned in time to see Ramón's last sign before he disappeared.

'bye dad.'

It wasn't that Fit liked being in pain, in fact he was usually one to avoid that kind of thing if he could, but there was something stopping him from pulling off his prosthesis and looking at the damage the limb had incurred in the two weeks they'd been in Purgatory.

He knew it was because the last few times he'd done maintenance on the limb was with Ramón. His baby boy had been in the Federation's hospital ever since they'd returned, and he couldn't bring himself to actually go into the boy's workshop without him.

So Fit dealt with it. The kids were bound to wake up eventually right?

Surely the Federation was going to find some way to get them back to their usual selves, and Ramón would be able to fix Fit right up again once he did.

It was just- it was hard to do things. It was hard to do things with his arm torn up and jolting electricity into his residual limb every time he moved it. It was hard to do things without Ramón by his side, without knowing he was *safe*. Sure the Federation had claimed that their hospital was the safest place for the Islanders' children to recover, but Fit couldn't help thinking it looked like a prison.

Seeing his baby boy behind that unbreakable glass, in that sterile white box, in that sterile white bed sent a pit of dread through Fit's entire body. Fit's brain kept screaming that the Federation had taken him, that they had *stolen* his baby boy from him.

And in a way they had.

And still, Fit couldn't bear to drag himself away from the hospital as much as the blinding Federation white turned his stomach.

He'd kept finding his way to Ramón's ~~*bedside to his cell*~~. He'd be doing chores, working on a project, coming or going from his janitor job, and he'd find himself standing there, close enough that his breath fogged up the thick glass that seperated him from his son. Somehow the electric twinges in his nerves hurt even more when he stood there.

That was where Fit was when Pac found him, gazing through the glass to his son, laying eerily still on the white sheets. There was a complicated swirl of emotions spinning through his head as he tried to get his feet to move from that spot by the glass. He finally pulled his eyes from the bed, and started to turn.

As he faced the doorway, Pac walked in, eyes locked on Richas' bed as he entered. The movement as Fit turned drew his eyes away though and he paused, pulling his lips into a smile as he made eye contact with Fit.

“Hi Fit, sorry, don’t mind me, just coming in to check on Richas.”

Fit smiled back, “No worries, I was just about to leave if you wanted privacy.” He started to head towards the doorway, but Pac caught his arm before he could pass him.

“Wait!” Fit paused, looking down at where Pac had grabbed his wrist. It was his prosthesis, but Fit couldn’t help but feel a phantom warmth from the other man’s skin on his own. Fit brushed off the feeling and drug his eyes back to Pac’s face as the other let go of his wrist, but he couldn’t help but feel a loss as the other moved away. *It was stupid, he couldn’t even feel anything with his prosthesis.*

“Sorry,” Pac said, taking another step back.

Fit shook his head, “No, it’s fine,” he rolled his shoulders back, holding back a wince at the twinge it sent up his residual limb.

“I just, I wanted to know if you wanted to hang out? I feel like it’s been so long since we’ve seen each other,” Pac’s gaze lowered, and he brought a hand up to scratch at his neck.

Fit nodded, “It has, I’d uh- I’d really like that Pac.”

“Great,” Pac smiled again, and this time it seemed more genuine, the corners of his eyes crinkling as he spoke, “I can let you know when I’m done, and we can meet up at Chume Labs?”

Fit smiled back, “That sounds great Pac. Just message me when you’re ready, okay?”

“Okay, I’ll see you later, Fit!” Pac turned back towards the beds, walking to where Richarlyson lay in his cubicle.

Fit brought out his warpstone, and quickly teleported back to his house.

Pac had been right, it may have only been a few days since they'd returned from Purgatory, but all the Islanders had been relatively distant, isolated as they nursed their injuries, and tried to revert back to regular life -or as regular a life you can have on the Island.

Fit was no exception, he'd spent the past few days shying away from everyone else he came across, staying in the less traveled areas, exchanging little more than a head nod or a quick hello with anyone he happened upon. As much as he tried to keep up with Pac, it was hard. He managed to respond to his hellos in the chat every morning, but beyond that, he hadn't really spoken to the Brazilian since the day they returned from Purgatory.

And Fit missed it. He hadn't realized how much he missed being around the other man until he'd had a quick conversation with him, seen his wide smile and heard his voice.

It was stupid how dependent he was on the other man. It had been barely three days. In the wasteland Fit would go weeks, sometimes months without talking to another person. Before coming to Quesadilla Island, he'd never really had regular conversations with a person. And it wasn't bad- no Fit liked being able to talk to people, to have friends, rather than be forced into isolation for safety. It's just easy to fall into old habits, especially after how Purgatory itself had practically yanked him back to the violent nature of 2b2t.

Fit was looking forward to seeing Pac again though. Maybe it'd be the final push he needed to get out of this teetering middle ground, caught between the life he'd been living on the island, and the ever present tug towards the isolation and brutality that had fueled him in the wasteland. It was getting harder to resist that part of him, so maybe shoving himself back into 'normal' -or whatever passed for it on Quesadilla Island- was the solution.

Fit managed to get some cleaning done at the gym before his

communicator buzzed with a message. Fit set the broom against the wall as he looked down at the screen, seeing Pac's messages.

pactw: *i am finished, heading back to chume labs*
pactw: *meet you there?*

Fit: *Yes, see you there!*

Fit sent his response off quickly before walking out to the warpstone in the front. Fit drug his hand across the air in front of the stone, activating the display before selecting the warp to Chume Labs, disappearing in a flurry of purple particles. He kept his eyes closed for a few seconds after he felt the ground return under his feet, breathing as the lingering virtigo that always accompanied the jumps faded.

Pac was waiting for him by the warpstone, grin growing as he hopped over to Fit, wrapping the American in a quick hug before pulling him towards Chume Labs, chattering the whole way.

Fit continued to listen to Pac's ramblings as they descended further into the labs, Pac trying to explain a recent project he was working on while Fit did his best to follow what the Brazilian was saying.

Finally, they reached a table in their lab room, chairs on either side, and Pac flopped down dramatically on one, gesturing for Fit to take the other. Pac finally seemed to take a breath as he relaxed into the chair, turning his focus back to Fit.

"So, what has been going on with you Fit? I feel like it has been so long since we saw each other!" He laughed a bit at the end, leaning forward across the table.

Fit shrugged, feeling another twinge go up his shoulder at the motion, "Not much y'know, visiting Ramón, working on the gym, that kind of

stuff.” He lifted his arms to rest on the table, letting out a quiet hiss as he felt an almost pinching sensation along where the metal of his prosthesis dug into his shoulder.

Pac looked over him rapidly, eyebrows furrowing in concern, “Fit, are you oka-“ he cut himself off as he noticed the bent and torn metal of Fit’s prosthesis, “What happened to your arm?”

Fit looked down, really taking in the damage for the first time. He’d been brushing off the pain and disfigured metal since Purgatory, maybe in hopes that it would be easier to ignore, at least until Ramón was well enough to help fix it.

“It’s fine,” he tried brushing it off again, but with the way Pac was pushing up off of the table and standing it didn’t seem like he was willing to do the same.

Pac stepped closer, “It is crushed around your shoulder, it must hurt, no?” He looked up to meet Fit’s eyes.

Fit shrugged, wincing again, “I guess so, I, it’s just-“ he paused for a second, deciding whether he should lie or not. Looking into Pac’s eyes though, he knew he wasn’t going to get away with a ‘it just slipped my mind.’ He sighed, scrubbing his flesh hand down his face. When he spoke again, his voice was weak, cracking over his son’s name, “Ramón always helped me with it.”

Pac nodded, sighing in understanding as he leaned his hip against the table, “I understand wanting to wait for Ramón’s help to fix it, but Fit, you are going to hurt yourself -hurt yourself more,” he corrected himself, “if you don’t at least take it off.”

Fit’s eyebrows furrowed in confusion, “What do you mean ‘take it off’?”

Pac's face scrunched to match the confusion on Fit's, "Huh, I- I mean take it off? Let your skin breathe and heal? The metal looks like it's digging in pretty hard."

Fit frowned, "I- I can't take it off. Is it supposed to come off?" He looked down at where the metal of his prosthesis connected to his shoulder. Fit had never taken the limb off before, nor had it been ripped off or broken off. He was under the impression that his basemate who'd made the prosthesis when he lost his arm had attached it pretty permanently to him. Most prosthetics were made like that on 2b2t, or else you risked it falling off, or being taken off or broken during a fight.

Fit didn't see any way for his arm to be taken off, and he figured if the limb had such a feature, he'd have been told about it back when it had been installed.

The confusion on Pac's face quickly morphed into horror, "What! You've never taken it off? Ever?" Fit nodded slowly and Pac leaned down to tug up the leg of his pants above his knee, revealing his own prosthesis.

Fit watched as his hand moved up to the bottom of the socket, pressing on a small button there. Fit heard a quiet click, before Pac was sliding off the limb, socket and all. A fabric-like material was left on Pac's leg, disappearing up below where his pants were rolled up. At the bottom of Pac's residual limb, connected to the fabric-like material was a short pin of metal, maybe two inches long. Pac bent his knee back and forth as he shifted to lean one hand against the table for balance, holding his prosthesis in the other.

"This comes off too," he lifted his leg, alluding to the fabric-like material, "It's just a pain in the ass to put back on, so I'm not going to do that." He leaned down and slipped the socket back over his residual limb, shifting his weight onto the prosthesis until another 'click' came from the socket.

"Huh," Fit looked down at his own prosthesis, "I didn't know that they

made prosthetics like that," he looked back over to Pac, "I thought the socket was attached to you, and you just switched out the bottom part." Fit knew there were other legs Pac could use, he'd had a running blade for most of the time they were in Purgatory, and he'd seen the Brazilian use it before then too.

Pac shrugged, "It does switch out below the socket actually, but I can take the socket off too. Makes it more comfortable, easier to let your skin breathe y'know?"

"Yeah, I guess so." Fit looked down at his arm again, "I've never taken this thing off though."

Pac's face turned quickly back into that earlier horror, "Wait, seriously? Not even when you and Ramón repaired it?"

Fit shook his head, "No, we just repaired it where it is."

"That really isn't good Fit, I don't know how you aren't dying of pain all of the time. Just by the end of the day my leg is killing me, I can't even imagine having to sleep with it on," Pac rolled his pant leg down before moving a little closer to Fit. He paused, taking a deep breath, "Seriously though, the way the metal is bent", he gestured at where his prosthesis surrounded his residual limb, the metal digging into his shoulder, "it could really hurt you, and I'm sure it doesn't feel good now." Fit shrugged, electricity twinging up his shoulder and across his chest again making him wince, "See! You just winced, you are in pain!"

Fit sighed, "Pac, I'll be fine, I've dealt with worse pain for longer, I can suck it up until Ramón wakes up and is able to fix it."

Pac frowned, "But you don't have to- to 'suck it up.' I can help you!" Pac gestured at his leg, "I made this whole leg from scratch -with Mikey's help of course- but I'm sure fixing your arm won't be too different." Pac deflated a bit at the mention of Mike, but he quickly straightened,

refocusing on Fit, “Can I at least take a look at it? I’m worried it's going to hurt you.”

Fit sighed again, “If you want to Pac, I don’t want you to feel like you have to do anything, I really am alright.”

“Nonsense,” Pac tugged Fit up to stand by his flesh arm, “follow me.” Pac led Fit through Chume Labs, hand not leaving Fit’s wrist as they walked. The warmth surrounding his wrist was distracting as Pac tugged him into a room with tables lining two of the three walls, all of them covered in wires and tools and half finished projects. Pac let go of Fit and gestured for him to sit up on a table that was in front of the ones by the wall, and was mostly cleared off. Fit hopped up, careful not to put too much weight on his prosthesis as he settled onto the surface.

Pac rummaged around on the desks in front of Fit, muttering to himself low enough that Fit couldn’t make out the words, though even if he could they were probably in Portuguese, so he wouldn’t have understood anyways.

Pac spun around, holding a screwdriver and a few other tools in his hand. He set them on the table next to Fit, before turning to look at the man.

“Do you think you could take this off?” Pac gently tapped on the leather pauldron that covered his left shoulder and the point where his prosthesis met his residual limb.

Fit nodded, right hand coming up to the buckle in the middle of his chest, unclasping it and setting it on the desk as well. He rolled up the sleeve of his shirt as well, letting Pac better see where the metal met skin. Looking down, Fit was better able to see the damage himself too. The metal plating around his shoulder was bent, pushing into the flesh there, and though it was covered by his shirt still, he could feel the pull of where the plating was embedded into the side of his pectoral, likely tugging and tearing skin if the pain there was anything to go by.

Pac bent closer to examine the socket and the metal that disappeared under his shirt. He looked up at Fit, “Are you okay with taking your shirt off too?”

“Oh, uh- sure?” Fit brought his hand up to take the bandana around his neck off first, using that to distract him for a second before he brought his fingers down to the hem of his shirt. Fit wasn’t usually one to be shy about his scars. In 2b2t they had been treated more like trophies of survival than anything, something most were proud to show off, but Fit knew the way that burn marks warped his skin wasn’t what most would consider pretty, hell, gnarly or even gross would probably be a better adjective. It was weird to feel self-conscious about it, but, well, Pac was ~~*in Fit’s opinion*~~ one of the most beautiful people on the island, surely he wouldn’t want to see the gnarled stretch of scar tissue across his torso. Fit shook off the thought. He was being stupid. He grabbed the bottom of his shirt, pulling it up over his head and carefully sliding it down his prosthesis so it didn’t get snagged on any of the rougher edges, then set it down on the desk next to the pauldron and handkerchief.

Pac leaned closer, examining the areas where his prosthesis was attached to the skin of his chest and shoulder. He stepped back, furrowing his eyebrows as he scanned Fits prosthesis. Pac took a deep breath, “I- uh, it's attached to you, you said?”

Fit nodded, “Yeah, it's all wired into my nerves over here,” Fit gestured at the top of his arm and his shoulder, “makes it so I can move my fingers and stuff. I think this bit,” he pointed at the metal plating over the side of his chest, “helps keep it attached. I don’t really know much about how it works, just enough to keep it working I guess. Ramón’s the one who added all the upgrades and stuff.” He scratched the back of his neck as Pac nodded, reaching up to pull his hair back. He smoothed the front back, gathering it at the back of his head and tying it off. The motion showed off the build of his arms, muscles flexing as he wrapped the tie around his hair. Fit averted his eyes, trying not to stare in the way he knew he had before. Pac still had the blue sweatshirt he always wore tied around his

waist, leaving himself in a black cutoff that showed off his arms and the wiry muscle there, and Fit was trying to stop staring at the Brazilian's arms every time they were around each other. It wasn't going so great, but at least he was doing better than he did in Purgatory.

Pac quickly got to work, somehow figuring out where exactly to push and pry with the screwdriver to pull off the panels, and more impressively, without hurting Fit too much.

It was difficult to do what he was doing without causing any pain of course, and Fit was already in a baseline of discomfort from the past few weeks, but that didn't stop Pac from mumbling out apologies every time Fit winced.

The absolute gentleness of it all shocked Fit a bit, but it was so Pac that it made perfect sense. Soon enough, Pac was pulling the plate off near his shoulder, then taking off the arm itself, disconnecting wires that were still embedded in his residual limb, revealing skin that was warped and stretched with burn scars; scratches and cuts spread across it from the metal of his prosthesis digging in. It was frankly pretty gross to look at, the pink and white scar tissue smeared with blood in some areas. The final panel, anchored into the side of his pectoral came off, and two small drops of blood breaded up, and started to fall.

"Oh!" Pac spun around, rummaging in desk drawers for a second before he pulled out a red box and set it on the table. Fit glanced over as he opened it. It appeared to be a first aid kit, bandages and gauze wrapped in sterile packaging visible inside from where Fit was sitting. Pac grabbed a few gauze pads, a bandage, and some tape, setting them all down next to Fit except for one gauze pad. He took the pad out of the sterile wrapping, pressing it into the two puncture marks on the side of his pectoral, "Here, hold this for a second."

Fit brought his hand up to hold the gauze to his chest, and Pac was whisking his way out of the room as soon as he was certain that Fit

wouldn't drop the pad. Fit sat there for a few minutes as he listened to muffled scuffling from across the labs, keeping pressure on the gauze so the bleeding stopped. Looking down, he saw that a cut on his shoulder had started bleeding too, and he gently pulled the gauze away from the side of his pectoral. Luckily it had stopped bleeding there, so he moved the gauze to press into the cut on his shoulder, soaking up the small drip of blood that had started to run down his arm.

Pac came back holding a semi-clear bottle of liquid and a few cotton swabs that he set next to Fit. Now able to read the label, he saw that the liquid was rubbing alcohol.

Fit pulled the gauze away gently, and most of the bleeding had stopped.

Pac leaned close and ran a finger along the scar tissue at the top of Fit's shoulder, and though he had little feeling left in the area from the burn damage, the touch still sent a spark of electricity across his skin.

"Explosion?" Pac mumbled, barely loud enough for Fit's hearing aids to pick up before seemingly realizing what he said, straightening, "Sorry Fit, that was rude, I- I didn't- you don't have to answer, I'm sorry for asking."

Fit shook his head, setting the now bloody gauze onto the table next to the rubbing alcohol, "No, don't worry about it, you- you're right anyways, it was an end crystal explosion, blew off everything below the elbow, and the rest was too burnt to be worth saving."

Pac nodded, "I just assumed because it looks like burn scars," he gestured at Fit's shoulder and chest before turning to grab the cotton swabs and rubbing alcohol. He gently dipped one end into the bottle then turned back towards Fit, "This is going to burn a bit."

Fit just nodded again, "I'll be fine," Pac smiled before letting the alcohol-soaked cotton swab swipe along the few open cuts on his residual limb and chest. It did burn, somewhat more than a bit, but the gentleness that Pac

used to gently cradle the limb and the feather-light touch of the cotton swab balanced out the sting.

It was a little overwhelming if Fit was being honest, even more so than removing his arm had been. Pac was so close to him. Fit could feel the puff of his breath against the skin of his cheek and jaw, the warmth of his hands on his shoulder and he couldn't help but stare.

Pac's eyebrows were gently furrowed in concentration, the pink of his tongue barely poking out from between his lips as he focused on keeping his hand steady and gentle.

Fit closed his eyes to pull himself from staring, turning his head so the skin of his neck caught Pac's warm exhales, rather than his jaw and cheek, though it didn't do much to stop the warmth that spread over the skin. Fit was sure he was bright red, and he hoped that Pac wouldn't notice, though the bright white lights did little to hide it.

Pac ran the cotton swab down another wound before setting the cotton swab down on the bloody gauze. He turned and grabbed a few large adhesive bandages, peeling off the paper backing on one and pressing it over the wound he'd just cleaned on Fit's shoulder. Pac continued with the two other spots of open skin on Fit's shoulder, cleaning them gently before placing more adhesive bandages on them. He then moved down to the end of his residual limb, where the skin hadn't been broken from the metal of his prosthesis, but was still rubbed an angry red. Pac used one hand to gently lift the limb, and Fit winced as his fingers touched the raw skin.

"Sorry, sorry," Pac muttered, letting go and grabbing some of the unopened gauze, "I'm going to put some bandages on your arm just to keep it free from the elements you know? I wish I had a regen potion or something, I just have a healing one that you should drink in a bit."

Fit hummed, "Here, let me see the healing one." Pac swiped a hand across

his inventory, handing Fit the bottle. Fit undid the stopper with his teeth, the fruity-sweet smell of the potion hitting his nose. He held it over the gauze that Pac was still holding, now unwrapped, “Put some of it on the gauze before the bandages.”

Pac grabbed the potion, pouring some of it onto the gauze before pressing it to the tender areas, “I thought healing potions didn’t work when applied to a wound, only regen.” Pac commented as he grabbed the bandage roll with one hand, the other holding the gause to Fit’s arm.

Fit shrugged, “I’ve always used it both ways.”

Pac wrapped the bandage over the gauze then up to the top of his arm, circling the limb a few times before crossing over the gauze again, then wrapping criss-crossed in a figure eight up the rest of his residual limb then across his chest before securing it with some tape.

“There!” Pac smiled, “All patched up!” He gestured at the rest of the healing potion, sitting next to Fit on the desk, “Drink that.”

Fit grabbed the bottle, chugging the rest of the bright red material, grimacing slightly at the sickly sweet taste that lingered in his mouth, as Pac turned to the remains of Fit’s prosthesis, spread across the desk in front of him.

“I’m going to try to see what I can fix here. It's probably better for you to get a whole new arm at some point though.”

Fit stayed quiet, glancing down at the bandages across his arm and chest. An odd feeling bloomed in his chest as he felt the tingling warmth of the healing potion working under the bandages. Pac didn’t have to carefully wrap him, treating each wound with antiseptic and bandages. He should have just wiped up the blood, waited until the healing potion fixed him up. It’s what Fit would have done. But he was Pac, everything he touched he handled so carefully, so gently. He treated Fit like he was something to be

cared for, and it was so unlike the treatment Fit had received from anywhere else.

Fit was pulled out of his thoughts as Pac started talking, “Sorry if you felt pressured to talk about your arm. I shouldn’t have asked.”

Fit shook his head, “No, don’t worry about it Pac. I don’t mind talking about it. Where I’m from it’s not unusual to lose a limb, most people will boast about it to show how well they’re doing at surviving.”

“Interesting. I’ve never really thought about it like that.” Pac hummed, and fell quiet for a moment, “I- Does 2b2t have respawn?”

Fit furrowed his brows, a little confused about the question, and why he would be asking before he realised, “No, it- well it does have respawn, its just really fucked up you know, never works right, and takes a million years even if it does. If you can stop yourself from dying, you do, even if it means losing a limb.” In most servers with respawn, losing a limb wasn’t something most were worried about. The injury would almost always kill you, and respawn would always revert injuries, including losing a limb. Not in 2b2t though, there respawn was more likely to leave you stranded in the void than return you in one piece, and even if it did bring you back, your injuries would often remain.

Pac nodded, “I lost my leg in prison. Respawn was turned off for inmates, they didn’t want anyone to use it to escape or something.”

Fit exhaled loudly, “Wow.” He wished he could see Pac’s face in this moment, rather than just his hunched over back as he worked on Fit’s arm.

There were another few moments of silence before Pac spoke again, “It’s weird. I’ve never really talked about this with anyone but Mike, but- I don’t know, I feel like you understand in a way that nobody else does.”

Fit nodded, “It’s hard here, to find someone who gets it. I know what you mean.”

Pac continued to work on the prosthesis, but Fit could see his head nodding, “It’s hard to explain to people who don’t know.”

He paused a few beats, “Do you still think about it?” Fit hummed in question, and Pac continued, “I mean, do you ever do something, and then you feel like you’re back there?”

“To when I lost it?” Pac nodded, and Fit took a breath, “I don’t think so? It's more... the wasteland in general that I feel like I'm back there. Purgatory really felt like that, with, y'know? The whole killing, and not trusting people,” Fit paused, “Do- do you feel like that?”

Pac was quiet for a long time before he answered, “Do you remember when I was really scared about Cellbit killing those Federation workers, about how he was acting like he was in prison?” Fit nodded, unsure where Pac was going with this, “He’s the one who- who took my leg, in prison. When- when he was killing those workers I felt like I was back there. With him.”

“Well, just like I said then, you aren’t alone Pac, if he, or someone else ever tries *anything* I’ll be there to help you, me and the rest of the island okay? We’re here for you Pac.” Fit tried to reassure the Brazilian.

Pac sighed, setting down the tools and turning to face Fit for a second, “Thank you Fit, you’re too good to me.”

“Never,” Fit shook his head, staring into Pac’s eyes, *“Anything for you Pac,”* he found himself saying, barely above a whisper, and he realized as Pac smiled, and turned to pick up the pliers and screwdriver again that he really meant it.

As Pac resumed his work on Fit’s arm he spoke, “And if you, Fit, if you

ever are feeling like you're back in the wasteland, you can always come to me. I don't know how much I can actually help, but I'm always willing to remind you that I'm here for you, you know? That you've got people here Fit."

Fit squeezed his eyes shut, willing his voice not to waver as he spoke, "Thank you Pac, you- I- thank you. You're too good to me."

"Any time Fit." A peaceful quiet settled over the room, the only sounds being those of the tools knocking against the metal of Fit's prosthesis.

It was comforting though, not awkward like silences tended to be for Fit, it was almost like a warm blanket thrown over the conversation.

Fit hadn't really talked about his arm like that in... well, he didn't even know how long. And Pac was right, it was nice to have somebody who understood, in a weird way. It was different, but good, and he could only imagine what it was like for Pac. Fit had met his fair share of other amputees on 2b2t, but Pac? Fit couldn't be sure that he wasn't the first amputee Pac had ever met save for himself. And sure, Richarlyson was also missing a leg, but the dragonling's limb loss wasn't scarred with the same trauma that his and Pac's were.

Minutes passed, but maybe it was hours, as Fit let his eyes droop shut, just relaxing for the first time since they left for Purgatory really.

Fit yawned loudly, making Pac spin around.

"Are you tired?" He grinned, setting his tools down and turning to fully face Fit, leaning back against the table and crossing his arms.

Fit's eyes flew open and he shook his head, "No, I'm not-" he was cut off by another loud yawn, Pac chucking.

The Brazilian stepped forward, grabbing Fit's hand to help him off of the

table, “Come on, you can sleep here,” he glanced at his watch, “it’s a lot later than I thought it was.” Fit slid down to stand, wobbling for a second, Pac coming up to grab his waist with his other hand, and the skin of his palm against his bare waist sent a tingling warmth up Fit’s body, “You can get some rest, and then I can finish fixing your arm up in the morning, and I’m sure the potion will have done its job by then.” Standing up, Fit realized he was a lot more tired than he thought, though he supposed the maybe six hours, maximum, of sleep he’d gotten since returning from Purgatory were responsible.

Pac removed his hand from Fit’s waist as soon as he regained his balance, and Fit couldn’t help but be sad about it. He wasn’t really paying attention to where they were going until Pac was sitting Fit down on a double bed with a blue quilt and pillows that looked so soft.

Something loosened around his leg and Fit looked down, finally snapping out of the tired daze to see Pac taking off one of his knee pads.

“Sorry,” Fit mumbled, leaning down to take off the other knee pad before moving down to unlace his boots. It was a bit of a struggle one handed, but he managed.

While Fit took off his boots and knee pads, Pac walked to the other side of the room. By the time Fit looked up again, Pac had changed out of his jeans and into a pair of athletic shorts, his pac-man hoodie no longer around his waist. He was holding another pair of shorts, handing them to Fit, “Here, if you want to change.”

He turned to put some things away on the chest of drawers in the room, and Fit appreciated not having eyes on him as he changed. He undid his belt and shimmied his way out of his cargo pants, sliding on the shorts; something that took longer than he was used to with only one hand.

Folding his pants as best he could, he set them and his belt next to his boots and knee pads at the end of the bed.

When he looked back up, Pac was sitting on the edge of the bed, fidgeting slightly, glancing between Fit and the floor like he wanted to say something.

Fit sat next to him, bumping his uninjured shoulder into Pac's, "What's wrong."

"Um, do- do you think I could sleep in the bed with you tonight? You don't have to if you don't want, I can sleep in Mike's if it makes you uncomfortable," Pac rushed to explain himself, "I- I just, I don't want to be alone you know?"

Fit nodded, scooting to the far side of the bed, which was up against the wall, and patting the open space next to him, "Of course Pac, don't worry about it," as Pac slid next to him, Fit expected to feel trapped in, stuck between Pac and the wall, but surprisingly, no such feeling hit him, "Just two dudes keeping each other company while they sleep."

Pac laughed, pulling off his prosthesis, "Yes, yes Fit, just two manly men sharing a bed," he set the limb next to the bed and peeled off the liner from his leg before turning the light off and slipping under the covers. There were a few seconds of silence before Pac spoke again, "Boa noite Fitche."

Fit smiled, feeling sleep tug at his eyelids already, strangely relaxed at the thought of falling asleep next to someone. It was different with Pac, he trusted him, felt safe with him, so why wouldn't he feel safe sleeping in the same bed as him.

"Boa noite Pac, sleep well."

Thank you, Fit
o o o
You're too good to me-
OIL
SHENMU 2024
Never.
Anything for you, Pac

CAIM (06W___)

Tesoro

Mariano (AmorGudham)

Fit era um cara solitário, e por isso não esperava querer ficar perto de tantas pessoas, não como agora. Estava voltando para casa depois de se despedir de quase todos no ***spawn*** da muralha, tudo estava diferente dos primeiros dias, os moradores passavam muito pouco tempo acordados, sem contar os que nem acordavam. Porém, era de se imaginar, muitas pessoas queriam se divertir e aproveitar a nova vida na ilha, mas a maioria só queria os filhos de volta.

A última conversa foi sobre como o Halloween seria mais divertido se os ovos estivessem ali, imaginava o Ramon montando uma supermáquina de doces e vestido de cientista, era estranho não o ter ali, e era estranho se sentir assim. Pessoalmente ele não achava uma palavra que definisse esse sentimento, nunca tinha sentido a falta de ninguém assim, por isso não saberia medir o tamanho da saudade que crescia no peito.

Era veterano de uma terra desolada, não tinha amigos próximos, apenas aliados em um mundo terrível, onde se matava ou era morto.

Difícil acreditar como o ano passou rápido, mas já era outubro, e as crianças não tinham retornado, no ar tinha um tipo de solidão coletiva em que todos eram cúmplices. Nem todos exatamente, pessoas como Tubbo e Bagi que não eram responsáveis por nenhum ovo, não entenderiam o vazio que a maioria dos moradores sentia.

Mas cada caso era um caso, por exemplo, o veterano sabia que seu amigo Pac tinha sido enganado pela Federação com remédios para a tristeza, então tentava manter o brasileiro junto do britânico, assim talvez poderia ter uma percepção diferente das coisas. Tubbo não tinha que se preocupar com canções de ninar ou vidas perdidas, apenas com suas máquinas e a vida amorosa.

Eles viraram um trio muito rápido, ***morning crew***, mas Fit sempre se via sozinho com Pac voltando para casa, já tinham passado por muita coisa juntos. Mas não juntos como agora, passaram pelo inferno das eleições, jogaram esconde-esconde, fizeram parte da Ordo... e é claro Fit junto de Ramon ajudou Pac a fugir de uma prisão com Mike uma vez. Entretanto, nunca ficaram totalmente a sós, nunca precisaram, veja bem, nunca tiveram vontade, eram bons amigos, mas nunca foram próximos como agora.

– Como vai? – O careca alongava os braços enquanto conversavam, cansado.

– Ah... bem haha por quê? Estou com uma cara ruim?

– Não é só isso, é que vou para casa agora, sono da beleza, sabe?

– Acho que vou ficar acordado um pouco, preciso arrumar a Ilha Chume Labs.

– Só não se force, relaxe.

– Tanto faz, não tenho nada melhor pra fazer.

Fit se sentia mal com isso, não sabia explicar bem, talvez só não quisesse que o outro tivesse uma recaída, indiretamente Pac já tinha o ajudado tanto, por isso sempre se sentia burro demais para colaborar.

– Podemos ir atrás do barco que encontramos esses dias!

– Não, hoje você parece cansado, e acho que já encontramos tudo lá, aquelas pessoas estavam sofrendo para conseguir sair da ilha, mas o barco ficou encalhado. A esperança encalhou. – A lógica fazia sentido, mesmo assim era triste pensar em um final tão abrupto.

– Eu sei o que encontramos, mas pode ter alguns materiais bons lá.

– Você sugere um... Passa tudo?

– O que acha?

– Não hoje, mas podemos tentar amanhã sim, não posso não aceitar! Mas acho melhor você ir dormir por hoje.

– Por hoje? Por quê? Eu que estou com uma cara ruim agora? O que você quer dizer com isso? – O mais velho arregaçou as mangas, como se fossem brigar, o que fez Pac rir na hora. – Nem comece ***Big Boy!*** Até amanhã.

Começou a rir junto do amigo ao ouviu o apelido, eles falavam essas coisas um para o outro e pareciam dois adolescentes, flertavam as vezes sem motivo.

Chegando no seu terreno, Fit nem entrou em casa, apenas foi para o buraco da montanha que costumava dormir, era uma breve ladeira para escalar, que já tinha as marcas das suas botas gastas. Não entrar na própria construção o fazia não pensar tanto no filho e nos projetos inacabados, ainda que às vezes encarasse a casinha do Ramon ao longe sempre quando podia, não queria entrar em desespero, sabia que o filho não desejava isso.

A caverna tinha apenas um quarto simples, era como as bases que o americano morou por anos em sua antiga terra, lugares escondidos por paredes maciças de pedra com praticamente nenhuma decoração. Ele não tinha muito, deixava seus maiores tesouros no elevador do filho, mas já vivia com muito mais luxo do que em seu antigo mundo.

Ao colocar a cabeça no travesseiro não conseguiu dormir, dessa vez não para se preocupar com sua missão na ilha Quesadilha ou em Ramon, se pegou pensando em Pac. Sentiu um aperto no peito, começou a lembrar como era difícil conversar sob as influências dos remédios, tinha medo

dele se deixar levar pela Federação mais uma vez.

A única coisa que parecia fazer Pac se sentir melhor era o seu senso de aventura, o brasileiro vivia dizendo que não explorava a ilha a um tempo, isso inspirou Fit. Se levantou pensando em como ter a atenção dele, um enigma talvez, mas como faria isso? Talvez um baú misterioso?

– Ele ficou mais motivado quando encontramos aquilo sobre o barco naufragado... ou trabalhador, pescador e caçador.

O veterano não tinha jeito para coisas carinhosas, porém ele tinha que tentar. Não apenas para o amigo, mas também pela própria sanidade.

Era uma quarta-feira de manhã, Pac tinha se acostumado a acordar naquele horário, praticamente como um instinto. A ilha Chume Labs era linda naquele horário, a casinha laranja em contraste com as flores coloridas combinava com o nascer do sol, enquanto a colina formava um caminho para um armazém secreto, que preparou para seu irmão de coração e o filho.

Ele desceu a escada lateral, chegando no primeiro andar, e passou pelos baús cheios de itens, todas as coisas que coletou durante os meses na ilha estavam ali, era como uma tentativa de se organizar até Mike acordar. Nessas semanas tinha perdido o costume de tomar café da manhã, preferia o café do Star Bobby, gostaria de se reunir com outros brasileiros e estrangeiros para jogar conversa fora, mas iria encarar o novo dia de barriga vazia.

Depois de um longo bocejo ele abriu a porta, finalmente.

– O que? – A porta foi impedida por alguma coisa na frente da casa, abria apenas uma fresta e era bloqueada por algo.

O brasileiro empurrou a porta com mais vontade e conseguiu se esgueirar para sair, fazendo o objeto ser arrastado pela terra fofa da pequena ilha. Era um baú simples de madeira, parecia vazio pelo peso, mas dentro ele achou um papel amarelado com desenhos, uma longa linha tracejada por ele e um "X" vermelho, como um mapa de pirata.

No verso descobriu que era um folheto da barbearia do Ramon, foi reutilizado para virar um mapa, de primeira não pensou no Mike, mas no Fit, só ele para guardar algo tão bobo assim, ainda com o nome do filho dele.

Pac estava recebendo muita ajuda do americano, às vezes conversavam sobre o Walter Bob, pensando que tipo de atrocidades os códigos teriam feito com o morador, era assustador pensar como aqueles seres eram estranhos. Ou até pior, a Federação poderia estar por trás disso, nem ele saberia dizer os limites de Cucurucho e seu império, e quanto mais tempo passavam ali mais coisas pareciam estar sobre o controle deles, tudo, menos as respostas que precisavam.

O brasileiro queria o Richarlyson de volta, o Mike de volta e o Walter Bob, mas ele não tinha nenhum deles.

– Hey! – Logo notou que o americano estava na ilha já, estranhamente não ouviu o barulho do transportador.

– Fit! Foi você que deixou esse baú aqui?

– Que!? Ah não, acabei de chegar, nem vi que tinha nada aí.

– Sei...

– Mas tem alguma coisa nesse baú? – O outro cruzou os braços, internamente tentava disfarçar que estava acampando do lado de fora há horas.

– Tem um folheto da barbearia, e umas coisas desenhadas ou... números? – Estendeu o papel na direção do outro, que nem o leu direito.

– Ah! Devem ser coordenadas, quer checar?

– Tem certeza de que são? – O brasileiro virou a cabeça tentando entender os números escritos com lápis.

– No final sempre são coordenadas que levam para algum lugar, né? Mas só vai saber que é isso se tentar haha.

Fit estava estranho, parecendo culpado de algo, mas ele não era do tipo de montar pegadinhas, não elaboradas, não com Pac. Quem seria então?

– Se forem coordenadas devem ser do Cristo Redentor.

– Como você sabe disso? Tipo como tem certeza?

– Eu e o Mike que construímos, ficamos falando sobre onde colocar e depois ainda viramos a estátua inteira! – Diz nostálgico, como se isso fosse anos atrás e não só alguns meses. – Bem então vai dar uma olhada?

– Como de costume não tenho muitas tarefas, então sim... vem comigo?

– Ir com você? – Aquilo saiu estranho, como se não estivessem grudados nas últimas semanas. – Ué sim, ou tem algum SHENANIGANS para resolver?

– Bem não é isso...

– O que é?

Ficaram se encarando, deixando a cena mais desconfortável ainda, na cabeça de Fit o amigo não ia convidá-lo, só que negar pareceria mais estranho ainda.

– Não estava pensando em sair, vim só dar um oi, mas...

– Se quer ficar com aquele robô do ***spawn***, tudo bem!

Se entreolharam com sorrisos se formando aos poucos, os dois caíram na gargalhada, como se ciúmes de inteligência artificial existisse. Não era a primeira e não seria a última vez que agiriam como namorados, mais especificamente como namorados possessivos, eles não eram assim, muito menos eram um casal.

– Vamos logo, assim você... – Se interrompeu, com medo de dizer demais.
– Assim não descobre a fofoca!

Foram até o teletransporte, chegando em um instante até o centro da Favela, Pac olhava em volta, procurando pelas próprias construções alguma coisa nova. Eles foram ao morro do Xerê, Fit olhava o chão, como se as formigas fossem os ajudar.

Estranho, se fosse uma pegadinha provavelmente seria algo do Bad Boy Halo, mas o demônio parecia muito triste para ficar arrumando problemas, seria bem mais elaborada que um pedaço de papel e algum móvel teria sumido. Poderia ser do Cellbit, mas ele estava dormindo por um tempo, Felps não aparecia tanto e Bagi ainda estava se instalando na ilha.

– Aquilo é uma fita? No braço esquerdo do Cristo! É tipo papel...

– Nossa, mas lá em cima? – Quanto mais o mercenário falava mais parecia estranho. – Sei lá acho que...

– O que? Tem algum chute?

– Não tenho, mas... olha se fosse o Bad ele teria roubado minhas poltronas, sem bilhetes, não vejo os brasileiros a um tempo e o Tubbo parece ocupado...

– Mas na ilha tem muita gente!

– Sim..., mas poucas ficam acordadas muito tempo para fazer isso, você tá me ajudando... pode ser o Foolish tentando se distrair do titã!

– E o Roier? Pierre?

– Sei lá, não acho que iriam mexer com a favela.

– Ah... estranho né haha – Fit tentava disfarçar como podia.

– Mas as coordenadas são para isso? Só uma pegadinha idiota? A pessoa me paga, sujar o Cristo é uma blasfêmia.

– Blasfêmia? Você odiaria o lugar de onde eu venho.

– Espera, acho que ainda tenho o teletransporte para o topo, vou olhar lá de cima! – Teletransporte?? – Antes mesmo de Fit terminar o outro tinha sumido da sua frente, como assim tinha um meio mais fácil de subir do que escalar aquilo na marra?

Pac se equilibrou no braço do monumento e foi enxergando o que era. Um grande papel higiênico enrolado em um dos braços da estátua, até parecia aquelas pegadinhas de Halloween de filme americano, ele se esticou e foi tirando a pichação dali, mas quando olhou melhor percebeu algo escrito.

“Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
In a land of hope,
In a place like June.

Without days full of light,
Or skies ever bright,
When we take flight,
The hearts feel right.

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
Even without hope,
I'm here with you.”

Aquilo era um poema? Em inglês ainda, agora ele não conseguia entender a intenção disso tudo, algo poético escrito em uma faixa branca e estendido em uma estátua da ilha, tinha que ser um enigma. Engoliu seco, não confiava na sua dedução, mas poderia fazer algumas hipóteses.

Enquanto isso o americano subia a lateral da construção com seu gancho de escalada, agora morrendo de raiva por não ter o teletransporte.

– Fit isso tá em inglês, que estranho... – Pac já estava com o papel nas mãos e se sentou no ombro da estátua. – Com certeza que não foi um brasileiro, mesmo.

– Sério? – O veterano disse sem fôlego, por tentar escalar tão rápido.

– Olha se fosse algo para mim não estaria em inglês, mas não é como se eles tivessem tempo... inclusive Richas e Mike fariam uma volta mais mirabolante. – Fazia uma careta exagerada, como se fosse sair fumaça da cabeça de tanto pensar.

Fit olhava o amigo, se sentando ao lado dele, estava cansado e não tinha planejado ir com ele achar o tesouro. Porém, ver Pac interessado assim era bom, ele mesmo tentou não encarar tanto assim.

– Não foi a Niki...

– Como sabe?

– Ela tentaria escrever em alemão, mas ela não acorda faz um tempo e não tem nada a ver.

– Espera, você sabe falar alemão?

– Também não foi o Etoiles. – Pac continuou pensando, tentando formar uma lista de nomes e motivos na sua cabeça. – Ele teria respeito pelo Cristo Redentor..., mas tem que ser alguém antes de setembro, não acho que foi um dos novos moradores.

– Olha o que você acha de tentar entender as pistas primeiro?

– Bem eu já sei que isso está falando da festa junina! por isso não deve ser ninguém que encontramos congelado, nem a Bagi.

O veterano achou incrível, como Pac conseguiu resolver tão rápido as partes da charada? O próprio gastou toda a noite e madrugada pensando nessas pistas. Mas tinha que disfarçar.

– Vamos para lá então, assim... bem vamos. – Juntos eles usaram os paraquedas para planarem até a terra firme.

– Achei estranho esse poema, ou talvez meu inglês não seja bom.

– Como assim? Eu consigo te entender, seu inglês é ótimo.

– Sei lá, parecia uma mensagem tão bonita, sobre esperança e coisas boas, quase romântico, que besteira haha.

Fit virou o rosto, querendo não ter escrito aquele poema idiota, não era exatamente original, pegou de um livro de inglês do Ramon e só fez alguns ajustes com o que pensava. Meu deus, será que saiu tão meloso assim? Não estava se reconhecendo naquele momento.

– Mas foi bonito, acha que pode ter sido uma das crianças que escreveu ou é de algum conto de fadas?

Pisaram no gramado do campinho, parecia congelado no tempo, de dias

menos escuros, mas super agitados, como lembranças de uma outra vida. As bolas de futebol esperavam alguém voltar para jogar como antes.

– Uau se passou tanto tempo assim? Setembro já acabou e esse lugar ainda não explodiu... – Pac parecia aéreo, não melancólico.

– Você... você diz o campinho ou a favela?

– Essa ilha inteira. Mas eu acho que entendo... eu não queria sair dela.

– Como não?

– Na verdade tudo estava tão divertido, Cucurucho era ruim, e ainda é, mas na minha cabeça se todos da ilha se organizassem...

– Não é simples assim.

– Pois é cada um quer uma coisa, mas às vezes a ilha é boa conosco, não a Federação, a ilha. E se não fosse esse lugar eu não conheceria o Richas, e você o Ramon.

Fit ficou em silêncio por um tempo, essa ilha era sua missão, fingir querer sair dali era parte do teatro, mas se ele mesmo não lembrava todos os detalhes do contrato, então como não entrar na onda da maioria dos moradores? O roteiro era dizer que não gostava da Federação como todos e passar despercebido, mas muito tinha acontecido e o próprio já possuía opiniões políticas.

– Mas você realmente não quer sair?

– Olha... quando eu e o Mike estávamos focados em mexer com a Federação e construir o Murderer Mistery... – Os olhos de Pac andavam pela grama perfeita. – Digamos que não importava, foda-se era eu, ele e o Richas contra qualquer coisa, então eu não precisaria fugir, agora eu acho que entendo por que fugir. A ilha nos proporcionou tantas coisas boas,

mas realmente valeu a pena? Valeu a pena conhecer o Richarlyson para ele precisar fugir de casa e sofrer?

– Ei! Calma, calma! Não precisa pensar assim. – O americano tocou no ombro do brasileiro, com uma expressão gentil. – Só vai te fazer mal, entendo a preocupação eu também... temo pelo Ramon, mas ele não iria querer que eu ficasse chateado assim, e vale para o Richarlyson e você.

Se encaravam esperando que o outro continuasse a falar, mas ninguém sabia como quebrar o silêncio, então desviaram os rostos aos poucos. Fit se sentiu mais estranho ainda, como se seu coração fosse pular do peito, e então veio o golpe final.

– Você tem razão Fitch... obrigado pelo conselho. – Pac se afastou com um sorriso que fez o outro ficar vermelho.

O brasileiro procurava alguma coisa embaixo dos lugares da arquibancada, qualquer coisa, enquanto lia o poema mentalmente, junho, violetas, céu, esperança e rosas. Rosas?

– Eu achei uma coisa, mas acho que é apenas uma ferramenta do Mike.

– Sério?

– É que antes de dormir ele me pediu pra... – Pac parou de falar, notando que não era apenas isso.

O moreno tirou uma caixa de metal detrás de um dos lugares da arquibancada, era quase como uma peça do ***Create*** em uma primeira olhada, mas na verdade era uma caixa quase toda selada de ferro. Ele olhou para o colega, um pouco confuso.

– É uma caixa, tem um lugar para digitar uma senha e tudo, parece até um cofre. – O criminoso examinava toda a superfície da caixa, procurando qualquer brecha.

– Então você precisa achar o código...

– Na verdade não, não está trancado. – Isso era mais uma pista fácil, e mais uma bola fora de Fit, ele queria sumir.

A caixa era cumprida, quase um metro e meio, como um estojo de violão, devia estar fechada pela tranca, pelo lugar Pac teve a impressão dela ter sido deixada às pressas.

– Acho que depois daqui teríamos mais pistas, ir para um terceiro lugar com outras coordenadas, mas...

– Mas?

– É que... isso é um tridente...

– Eureca! Então você já sabe aonde ir!?

– Fitch... foi você não foi?

Dentro do estojo havia um lindo tridente do oceano, que refletia os rostos dos dois, pelo reflexo dava quase para ouvir o mundo do americano despencando.

– Foi você que montou essa pegadinha? – Ele disse como se fosse algo secreto, sussurrando. – O que? Haha Acha que fui eu?

– É que... olha você está estranho desde o começo do dia, quase não veio comigo, mesmo que eu saiba que você não tem nada melhor para fazer. – Disse com uma certeza sólida, que não demonstrava facilmente. – Folheto da barbearia, junho, tridente e rosas.

O americano parecia surpreso, não por duvidar de Pac, mas queria muito que o mistério durasse bem mais. Algo doeu no peito e acabou desviando o olhar.

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– Foi uma péssima ideia, né?

– O que?

– Fui eu... – Se sentou em um dos bancos, olhando em direção à praia, felizmente a visão era limpa. – Desculpe, eu só queria algo para te animar, mas como viu eu não sou bom com enigmas, quebra cabeças e com segredos, não queria sujar a favela ou te preocupar.

– Espera! Está se desculpando de que?

– Você gostou?

– Eu amei, foi divertido com certeza!

– Era para você descobrir sozinho, por isso eu disse que não vinha, mas você começou a achar estranho e eu vim.

– Se te deixa feliz, você não ajudou em nada!

As pessoas que eles amavam não estavam ali, se antes o tempo não importava, agora tinham tempo de sobra pela falta de futuro e sentido para os projetos de antes, precisavam esperar, talvez procurar, mas no fundo, iam fazer o que sabiam, sobreviver.

Pac se sentou ao lado do amigo, ombro a ombro, na arquibancada apertada, mas vazia, adiantados para assistir um grande jogo. Era estranha essa relação, esses momentos os deixavam menos sozinhos, todos na ilha estavam estranhos, mas esses dois não se reconheciam no espelho. Fit segurou a própria nuca.

– Mas é sério, eu comecei a me preocupar ontem, você parecia mal, e esses dias fiquei pensando na possibilidade de você...

– Ter uma recaída? – Pac soltou um risinho.

– É isso...

– Olha eu entendo, isso foi legal, obrigado, mas eu tô bem! Não sou bom em cuidar de mim, mas não se preocupa.

– Nem vem com essa, você já ajudou muita gente, já me ajudou muito, e nunca espera nada em troca, você merecia algo legal! – Por um instante Pac ficou sem o que retrucar. – É engraçado, você é um criminoso, mas age como esses heróis valentes de filmes, mesmo tendo suas falhas querem fazer o que acham certo.

– Sério? Haha

– Sim... bem isso saiu meio meloso igual o poema né? – Riu para disfarçar a vergonha. – Verdade, meu deus você que escreveu o poema... – Pac abriu um sorriso divertido, encarando o outro por mais tampo que o normal.

O brasileiro nunca admitiria, talvez nem para o irmão, que admirava muito o veterano, escutava os feitos dele pelo rádio, como tinha sobrevivido, enganado e matado em uma terra sem leis. O mercenário era uma lenda viva, estar perto dele já era legal, mas ter ele o elogiando o deixava em choque.

– De toda a forma Pac, se cuida, eu não conheço o Mike como você, mas imagino que ele iria te querer vivo.

– O Mike é do tipo que me salvaria, mas só para continuar os experimentos dele.

– Por que você o deixa testar em você?

– Olha eu também sou cientista, também quero testar minhas hipóteses! – Disse alegre como sempre, com seus sorrisos reconfortantes. – A verdade é que eu não quero que ele se machuque, no começo a justificativa era eu ser o mais velho, agora nos acostumamos com as coisas serem assim. Ele tem ideias melhores, o cérebro dele precisa ficar intacto.

– Então acho que só os burros ficaram.

– Do que você está falando?

– Mike e Ramon, um dormiu e o outro fugiu com os irmãos, para largar nós bestas aqui.

Mais uma vez riram juntos com gosto, tentando achar graça na situação que estavam, um queria indiretamente dar paz ao outro. Mesmo que muitos sonhos deles tenham sido interrompidos, faziam mais um sonho, o partilhavam em dois e faziam desse novo sonho algo deles.

Que sonho? Eles já não tinham certeza.

– O Tubbo é inteligente, e ele não sumiu ainda.

– Ainda né, a qualquer momento ele vai ser levado pelo namorado dele, aquele rapaz da Federação.

– Você está com inveja? Quer um namorado agora ***Big Boy***? Haha

– Nem vem, eu não tô disponível pra ninguém!

– Dá para perceber você é cheio de segredos. – Pac diz provocando, mas de uma forma diferente, era curioso até demais sobre o que o outro escondia.

– Pac!

– Não tudo bem! Fique você e seus segredos!

Apesar de ser uma conversa descontraída, Fit respirou fundo, não queria trazer uma grande confissão, mas sentia que o amigo talvez merecesse uma explicação.

– Olha eu não quero esconder tudo de você, mas quando eu te conheci eu já tinha essas coisas a resolver, mesmo não achando justo você não entender os assuntos que tenho. – Fitch! Não precisa se preocupar, eu confio em você, se não pode me contar deve haver uma boa razão.

– Mas não é estranho? Eu gostaria de te explicar algumas coisas.

– Quando você tiver certeza pode me contar, você me explica com calma, também tem coisas que eu prefiro guardar.

Pac tinha essa doçura contagiante, era refrescante conversar com alguém tão legal, o americano não tinha muito disso.

Enquanto conversavam a culpa crescia em Fit, ele precisava entregar os dados de todos os moradores para seu contratante, seu amigo não era exceção. Dados de jogador, o que quer que isso fosse, era parte do contrato, e por lembrar disso ele suspirou. Isso significava trair essas novas conexões? Provavelmente sim.

Ele mesmo estava notando, como Tubbo insistia em dizer que Fit e Pac estavam muito juntos, ele respondia que não era da conta de ninguém, e não era mesmo. Mas ao mesmo tempo o americano criava desculpas, dizia que eram colegas de quarto, vizinhos ou até mudava de assunto, por quê?

Queria provar a todos que não eram nada além de amigos, por medo de se apegar demais, tinha que ignorar as vozes da sua cabeça dizendo que havia algo além no ar.

– Mas agora é a minha vez! – Pac se levantou rápido, reparando como o outro estava com um rosto triste. – O que acha de ir ao StarBobby?